

ADRIFT IN
NEW
ZEALAND



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ADRIFT IN NEW ZEALAND





SOPHIA, THE GUIDE

ADRIFT IN NEW ZEALAND

BY

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AUTHOR OF
"THE LUCKY SHOT," "THE SQUATTER'S STUD," ETC., ETC.

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AN INTRODUCTION AND AN EXPLANATION

IN introducing this little volume on New Zealand I wish it to be clearly understood that as a practical guide to that country it is useless, as a Standard Geography for the Board Schools it is worse than useless ; and I frankly admit that students of natural philosophy, geology, botany, or archæology will not be interested in it.

Missionaries will find no encouragement in it to throw up their work in this country and go to civilise the Maoris ; whilst Little Englanders will, I regret to say, fly from it like rats from a wire-haired terrier.

With the exception of these people, I hope to be able to please, interest, and perhaps instruct any one who takes up my little book, and if I am able to inspire them with one-eighth of my own enthusiasm

regarding this group of islands, I shall be more than satisfied.

With these few words of introduction I will endeavour to run my readers through this lovely land, in which I have spent seven most delightful years.

E. W. E.

August 1906.

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ADRIFT IN NEW ZEALAND

CHAPTER I

I arrive with threepence—My first impressions—A hint to hard-up travellers, and my first job—The shops and people—My stay at a farm, advice to workers, and my opinion of the colonial girl.

“WELL, young man, what do you think of it?”

I was leaning over the side of the boat and gazing at a rugged line of rocks, when I was suddenly asked this question. My interlocutor was an elderly man, with a grey beard and a broad-brimmed hat.

“Not much, so far,” I replied; “but I suppose there are some trees further inland?”

“A few,” he answered, with a superior sort of smile. “What do you think of doing when you arrive?”

“Doing! Well, to tell you the truth, I haven’t thought of it yet. What do most fellows like myself do?”

"Not much." The answer came sharply, and my companion relapsed into silence, whilst I returned to my contemplation of the changing coastline. Suddenly I heard him speak again. "Some take to drink," he said, "others go on the gum-fields—and then commit suicide."

"You are a cheery person," I remarked. "Perhaps you would not mind giving me an idea as to which of these lines you think I'll follow?"

The old man glanced at me with a stony stare.

"Take to drink first, and then—" but before he could finish his sentence the bell rang for breakfast, and in his eagerness for that meal he seemed to forget all about me, and hurried below.

Had I not been young and keen his prophecy might have damped my ardour for a new life amid new scenes, but as it was I laughed, and was soon making short work of a basin of weak porridge.

By the time breakfast was over the view from the deck had changed considerably, and, in place of the dark and dreary line of rocks, a beautiful panorama of green fields and dense woods, with cosy little homesteads dotted here and there, met my view. Before many minutes had passed I

was entering the most beautiful harbour in the world, and the white-roofed houses of Auckland lay before me, nestled together at the foot of an old volcano.

It is a wonderful sight, this first view of the harbour. It opens up so gradually and the eye travels from one little bay and brilliant scene to others more brilliant, till the mind is almost bewildered and the sight dazed with the galaxy of colour. It is the marvellous colouring that has made this harbour the rival of Sydney, and its compactness that has placed it first in the eyes of every one but the Australians. They, it is said, are somewhat prejudiced in favour of Sydney harbour.

It would be impossible to describe my first impressions of this place, for everything was so new and so strange, but I remember I could not help thinking of the smoke and dirt and dreariness of London, and trying to realise that this was a January morning.

The sun was pouring down from a cloudless sky on to the clearest blue sea, and a warm air was blowing off the land, laden with perfume. Picnic parties were camping in the bays, and the

white sails of many yachts stood out clear and bright, making the scene more beautiful.

On the wharf a crowd of people were waving their handkerchiefs. I could see no dull faces there, no ragged urchins, nor could I discern what I naturally looked for—men with top-boots, long spurs, big sombrero hats and blazing red shirts. I confess I was disappointed at this, but, on catching sight of a group of fashionably dressed and very pretty girls, I felt a sense of compensation for the loss of my cowboys.

As we struck the wharf full butt with our bow—I am not sure if all mail-boats do this—I was surprised to hear a shout, and the next instant to see a hansom cab flying down the wharf. When, a couple of seconds later, I saw a policeman run to the horse's head and stop it, I really thought I was back in London.

The crowd was now hurrying on to the boat. They were a merry lot, and as English-looking as the people I had left six weeks before. There was no unpleasant accent to jar on one's nerves, and their gay laughter was infectious. Though the fashions were last year's, they were well suited to the strong and healthy women who wore them.

Whilst I stood watching friends meeting each other, and listening to the babel of voices, I was somewhat startled by a big fellow who gripped me by the hand.

“ Halloa, old chap, I’ve found you at last ! ”

In the excitement of arriving I had completely forgotten that I had written to an old friend, at the last moment, to meet me. It was a great piece of luck for me, as I found that, with my usual want of forethought, I had spent *en route* on various enjoyments all the money I had been given to start me in this new land—I had only threepence left.

I am going to digress here and tell you a secret. If you want to enjoy yourself in a new country, and also want to make its acquaintance properly and do well there, never land with any money. I have travelled far and seen many new places, but only once did I break this rule in a big way. It was in Philadelphia, and I had a very bad time there, after I had spent what I had brought with me, and was so keen to get out of the place that I shipped as an ordinary seaman on an oil boat bound for London. Money does you no good in a new place, for whilst you’ve got it you don’t bother about work ; and it’s work you want.

The only time I had an unpleasant experience through arriving without money was when I landed in San Francisco, U.S.A., penniless. There, unless you have sixty dollars, you are considered an undesirable emigrant and are returned to the country from whence you came. I knew this, but in spite of it I spent my last sixpence in Honolulu on a bunch of bananas, and when I was confronted by the Emigration Officer at 'Frisco with the usual question : "Have you sixty dollars?" I was rather at a loss to know what to say ; but, remembering the Americans were good at bluffing, I thought I'd try some.

"Sixty dollars ! what's that ?" I said, speaking as nearly as I could like Englishmen do on a foreign stage.

"Sixty dollars !" yelled the man, showing he had no control over his temper.

"Look here," I said, "I don't know anything about your dollars, but if it's money you want to see, and sixty British sovereigns would please you, I'll see what I can do—but keep your eye on those hungry-looking chaps over there whilst I count it out," I added, as an afterthought.

"Pass on, I've got no time to waste with you,"

shouted the official, and I was rudely pushed along, though I hadn't sixty cents; but I had a decent suit of clothes on, which goes a long way.

To return to Auckland and my friend. He was a jovial sort who seemed to know every one, and had very little difficulty in getting my things through the Customs, so that before long we were bowling down the wharf in his dog-cart. He started by asking me dozens of questions about home and his relatives, but I promptly shut him up, and in exchange plied him with questions.

"Half a second," he exclaimed, interrupting me, "I bought some potatoes at this auction, and we might as well take them home with us."

"Right you are," I said; "I'll sit here whilst you get them."

He smiled at me.

"There are ten sacks," he said, "and I want you to help me load the cart up with them. You've come here to work," he added, "so there is nothing like making an early start."

For a moment I wavered. I could not help wondering what sort of a figure we two would cut in a dog-cart loaded with ten sacks of potatoes

but I was his guest, and decency forbade my refusing my help ; so I jumped down.

We were just coming out of the room with the third sack, when suddenly I became covered with confusion (as they say in novels) and let my end fall to the ground. There, right in front of me, was the bevy of fashionably dressed girls I had seen on the wharf, and with them two of the first-class passengers whom I had endeavoured to impress during our six weeks' voyage.

The potatoes rolled in a heap at their feet, and I, to hide my face, scrambled on the pavement after them.

“Well, you are a juggins !” I heard my friend call out, and felt thankful he had not mentioned my real name. “Miss Frazer,” I heard him say, “I must apologise for my friend here—he’s only just arrived, and I’m afraid you frightened him.”

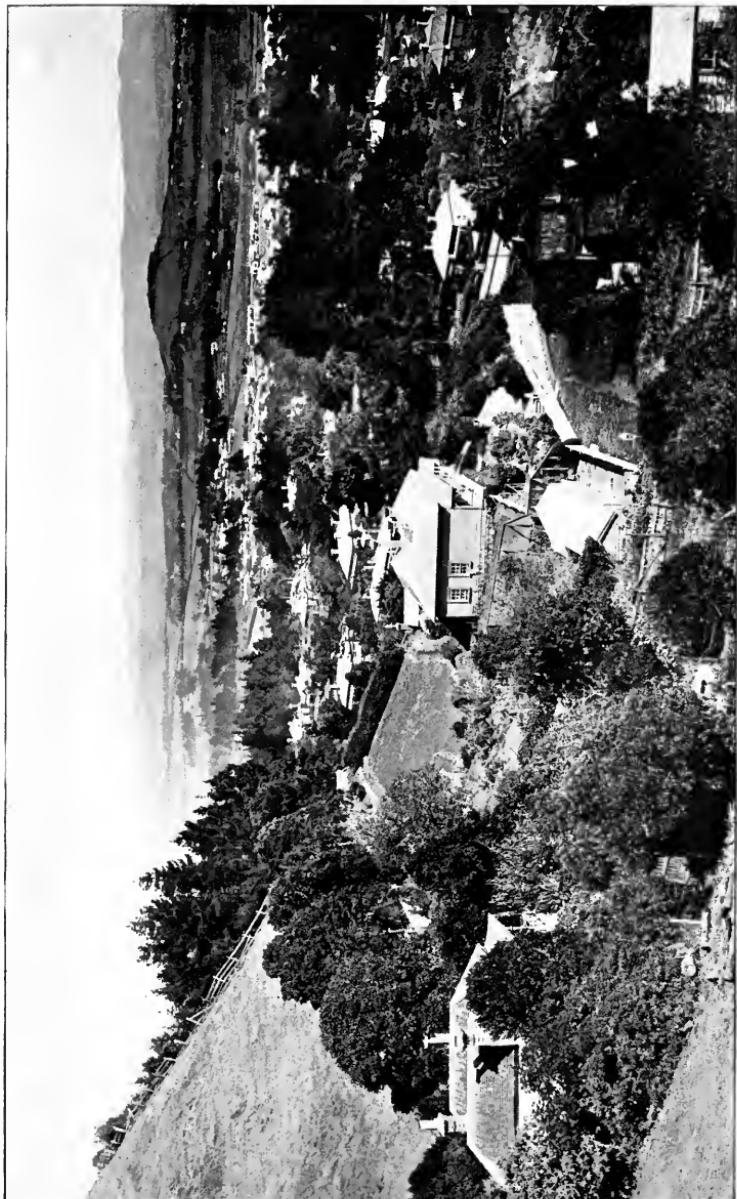
My confusion now became worse, for as I peeped round I could see he was talking to the very best-looking girl in the whole crowd. Slowly I arose. The blush was still on my face, but the charming girl soon laughed it away, and from that day to this I have never been ashamed of work. Though I drove through the main street

of Auckland perched on the top of ten sacks, while my friend sat on the shaft shouting out the places of interest, I never once tried to hide my face in my hat, but bravely looked abroad.

It was a quaint way of seeing the town, but I had the advantage of an exalted view. Queen Street is a fine, broad road with two lines of cars running down the middle and turning off up two hills at the far end to the suburbs. The whole street is, of course, devoted to shops, offices, theatres, and hotels, and very much resembles a bit of Knightsbridge with the top end of Sloane Street knocked into it—with perhaps a couple of better buildings of a grander and more picturesque style thrown in. The shops have verandahs in place of our blinds, so that on wet days you can wander about without even damping your hat.

One thing that particularly struck me was that the windows displayed replicas of all the things I had seen in London. The music-shops had all the popular songs; the tobacconists had the usual brands of tobacco and the same sort of pipes, whilst the milliners and drapers displayed the same peculiar garments, and at the same peculiar prices, though farthings are practically unknown there.

Here let me correct an error. Many people labour under the idea that town life in the colonies is quite different from town life in England, but let me tell you that you will find things pretty much alike in every English colony. When you dine out you still mistake the waiter for your host, and you still hear Chamberlain and Bannerman discussed. When dinner is over and the drinks and cigars are finished (same drinks, same cigars!) you pass into the drawing-room to find the girls singing the same old songs at the same grand piano ; and finally, the servant, with the same white cap, helps you into your coat, and when you go she gives you the same old smile. There are differences, however, in these dinner-parties which I forgot. The men wear shirts that button down the back, and the women are abstainers. Dinner is at 7.30, and carriages call at the usual hour. With these few differences things go on in New Zealand just as they do in England, and though it is a protected country and everything is taxed up to the hilt, you can live there for about one-third as much as you do here, and keep a horse to carry you about into the bargain. I didn't learn all these things on my drive through Auck-



AUCKLAND FROM MOUNT EDEN



land, but what I saw was an interesting town with fine suburbs stretching out for miles, and broad roads lined with well-built houses boasting deep verandahs and good gardens. The men, women, and children dressed as they do in England, and some were walking, some driving, some biking, but all were looking well and flourishing. I saw no beggars or poverty-stricken slums, and only one cemetery, whilst I balanced myself on those ten sacks.

Fortunately for me no vehicle is allowed to trot round a corner, and at every crossing the driver must slow down. Had my friend not adhered strictly to these rules of the road my equilibrium would have been upset and my drive to Onehunga—that town noted for being the only one that has ever had a lady mayor, but will never have another—would have been a most painful one.

Suddenly I shouted to my friend: "What river is that?" as I caught sight of a great stretch of water.

"It's the sea," he yelled back, "and here's my place," he added, pulling up suddenly and nearly saving me the trouble of climbing down.

"The sea!" I exclaimed, on regaining terra-firma. "Then where are we?"

"Just the opposite side of New Zealand to that on which you were a couple of hours ago. You can write and tell your friends that you drove right across the country on ten sacks of potatoes," he said, laughing, "but you need not add that this is its narrowest part and is only a nine miles' drive."

My friend Johnston, I found, had a small dairy-farm and market garden. His wife was a colonial and the biggest asset he possessed, so he informed me, and I quite agreed with him before I left his friendly shelter.

She was a typical colonial girl, and was equally at home in the kitchen, cooking the dinner, as in the drawing-room accompanying her vocal friends on the piano. She could milk a cow with the best man on the farm, and could ride like a cowboy, and swing an axe with as steady a stroke as any bushman I have since met.

They kept no domestic, but the home was as clean and cosy as any I have been in, and when friends came to meals there was always plenty for them, and a hearty welcome which was worth more. When the meal was over and the inevitable tea drunk, the things had to be washed up, but it was light work, as every one helped.

Work, I found, was quite a pastime in New Zealand, and instead of people evincing a desire to shirk it, as I had so often noticed at home, they seemed to enter into the spirit of it and enjoy it. It was the same on the farm : the men took a pride in their labour, and did it, not because it had to be done, but because it was their work ; and instead of one man's getting annoyed because another did too much, they seemed to scorn any of their mates who were careless or slack, and dubbed them "loafers."

This epithet is the one that stings more than any other, and every man who doesn't work, be he rich or poor, is termed a loafer and is the butt of the public.

All this seemed very strange to me because I had lived on a farm or two in England, and had often heard one man abusing another for doing too much. "Steady there, Bill," the cry would be, "it makes my back ache to look at you." But, strangest of all, it is not the colonial who works the best and hardest, but the man who has come from the old country, and he who can do most in his eight hours is generally the public schoolboy. They are the gentlemen's sons who

go there young, and rough it a bit, who do the most work and turn out the best colonists.

I hate the man who loves work and is for ever at it; who takes no rest and gives little to any one else. He is a bore, and his work resembles him: it is uninteresting and flat, and there is a lack of invention in it. Give me the man who by nature is lazy, but works hard so that he can get what he has to do done quickly, and who does it well so that it has not to be done again. That man generally takes an interest in his work, and whilst he is at it his whole thought and energy are concentrated on it.

There is a secret about work that I found worth knowing.

If you buck against it, it pays you out by making itself horribly disagreeable. It's very human, and the secret is to humour it. By entering into it with a good will and taking its waywardness with a smile, it not only becomes easy but enjoyable.

I remember once having to work alongside an old man-o'-war's man. He was a philosopher in his way, and one day, when we were sawing big trees into logs with a cross-cut saw, each working an end of it, he turned to me:

"They call this the hardest work in the bush," he said. "I reckon it's about the easiest. Any fool can do hard work, but it takes a wise man to make a heavy job light."

I looked surprised.

"You don't believe me," he said, "but just you put all your weight into your end of the saw and I'll do the same."

In a couple of minutes I had had quite enough of the experience, and was only too glad to let the weight of the saw do the work. It did it quite as well and twice as fast. The following out of this principle also changes bush-felling from a heavy, back-breaking job into a light, enjoyable task. The weight of the axe falling into the tree cuts a finer and deeper notch than the heaviest blow can. So with all work: it's brain, not muscle, that tells, and it is not the big men who do the most work.

Early in my stay with my friend I had another example of this. I had just learnt to milk a cow, and one morning when I got up I found myself in a bad temper. My boots were wet and stiff to begin with; then I couldn't find one of the cows, and when I did I discovered that the yard was about two feet deep in water. Everything made me cross. The

cows also refused to be bailed up, and I banged them and, I believe, swore horribly ; but at last I got them all right and, seizing my stool, sat down beside the first one. Perhaps I banged the stool also, or perhaps I handled the cow roughly ; but, try my hardest, I could get no milk out of her. It came in dribs and drabs, and my wrists ached so that I could hardly move them, and by the time I had finished the three—they all treated me the same—I felt more like going back to bed than tackling my breakfast ; and yet the morning before I had milked them all and had hardly known I had wrists at the finish. That morning I learnt that it doesn't pay to get cross with your work, or fight against it, for it hits you back. Go with it, and all is well !

My friend's farm was a very small one, and he, his wife, and a boy, used to do all the work. He kept six cows—three in milk and three grazers—half a dozen pigs, about two hundred fowls, and a few ducks, turkeys, and geese, and he had about two acres of market-garden. I suppose you could have bought him up for one hundred and fifty pounds, and yet he was able to make a very comfortable living, and his six-roomed bungalow

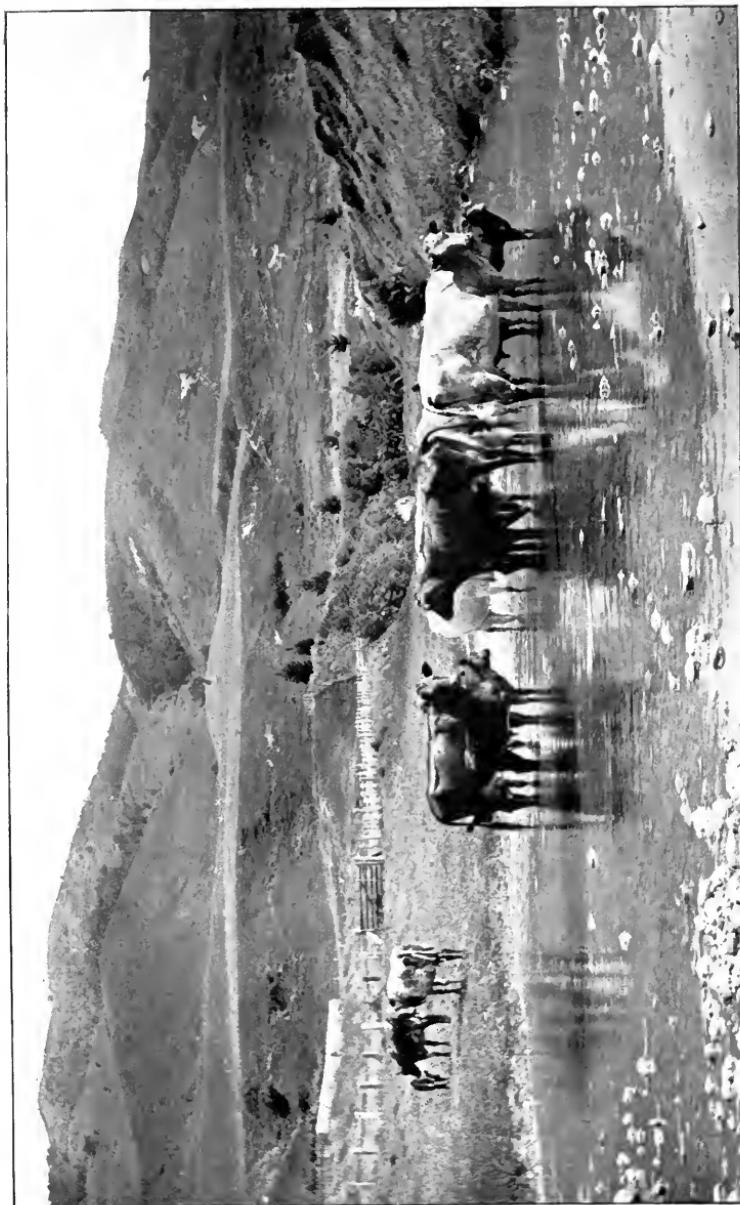


Photo by W. Reid.

MILKERS AND CALVES

was furnished in the best of taste. He kept a couple of good horses, and generally had a friend or two staying with him. I never knew a man who could work as well as he could, or who enjoyed a good rest as he did.

In the evenings we had music or played cards, and somebody generally dropped in ; or we would run round to a neighbour. As a rule we got off to bed at eleven (except when we went to the theatre), and rose about six feeling fresh and fit.

During the first few weeks of my stay I could not make up my mind whether I liked the colony or not. There was a difference in everything, and yet there wasn't, which sounds paradoxical ; but were men and women of the upper and middle classes in England to do as they do in the colonies in the way of work, then the life here would be the same, and the only difference would be in the climate. No kind of work is a disgrace in New Zealand, but poverty is ; whilst in England you may be poor but you really must not drive a milk-cart or a 'bus, and if you ask your friends to dinner you must not extend the invitation to the kitchen and expect them to help you wash up. Nor does it do to request them to

make their own beds, if they are staying with you; but in the colonies you can, and on the whole I prefer that principle of frankness better than the false one of show so common here.

Throughout New Zealand I found that there was much more frankness displayed than I have seen elsewhere. In fact, at first I thought the colonials absolutely rude. If they do not like you they make no bones about it, but let you know. This, to say the least of it, is disconcerting; but, on the other hand, you know that those who do favour you are genuine. There is very little toadying done, and people are open and do not disguise their likes and dislikes. Amongst the women this is particularly noticeable, and many an Englishman has come a cropper through mistaking the frankness of a colonial girl for more than ordinary friendship.

The men and women are on a much more friendly footing than in England. The girls are more like jolly good pals, and, unlike their diffident English sisters, they do not live in fear that if they show they like a man they will be considered "fast" by their friends, or in love by the man. I have known several Englishmen who have proposed to girls there, feeling pretty sure they would be accepted,

because they had, in vulgar parlance, been "keeping company" with them, yet they have met with a refusal. The girl has meant nothing more than friendship. If a woman enjoys a man's society it does not follow that she wishes to marry him, and *vice versa*. In New Zealand it is possible to have girl friends as safely as men, with the result that the sexes are more equal and each benefits thereby, whilst Mrs. Grundy only smiles.

The colonial girls are splendid fellows ; they are strong and healthy, and not given to nerves and hysterics. The men treat them far better for being as they are, than they would if they were afraid to trust themselves abroad with them. The old idea of the pedestal for women is worn out, and if women want men to admire them they must get down and join in the fun of living. This is what has made the colonial girl one of the most fascinating creatures in the world. She understands men, and is equal to them in any of their moods. She too is a creature of moods, and, like her brother, requires plenty of freedom. To-day it may take form in out-door exercise of a violent nature—a wild gallop into the heart of the bush, but to-morrow the calm of the river will please

her best, and as you idle down the stream, letting the willows just brush the boat and the water lap soothingly against its sides, you will find she is as placid as the stream and as thoughtful as the great black swans that glide by you.

You can make love to her to-day, and a more sympathetic listener you cannot find ; but to-morrow do not think of love, or mention it, if you prize her companionship—the hour has passed. Variety is the keynote. Give her plenty of it.

She is not superficial, nor is she merely “manly,” as some would say, for she reads much, thinks deeply, and is keenly interested in the affairs of the state. She is no mean politician, and can argue without getting cross. She has feelings deep and strong, but she seldom lets them intrude or bother you.

She is a type of woman that evolution has created and environment has formed. In a word, she is the woman who had to come.

N.B.—There are exceptions.

CHAPTER II

My experience of carpenters—My walk for work, and good resolutions. —

Am engaged as a farm-hand—Temptations in a tea shop—Tennis *versus* Farming—A chance acquaintance—More temptations, and my fall.

WITH that conceit peculiar to young Englishmen, I came to the conclusion, after a month's work at my friend's, that I knew all there was to know about farming and colonial life, and so decided to leave the friendly shelter of his roof and strike out on my own. I confided my wish to him, and said that I could not go on accepting his kindness and the ten shillings a week he was giving me, as I knew that he could get on just as well without me.

To this he said nothing, which I thought was unkind of him, but he fell in with my idea and promised to keep his eyes open for me.

Three days after our conversation I was glancing at a paper and caught sight of the following advertisement :

"Wanted at once: a rough carpenter; seven shillings a day. Apply J. Morris, Onehunga."

The seven shillings appealed to me, and as the advertiser did not state how rough the carpenter was to be, I decided to apply to Mr. J. Morris at once.

From my earliest days I had delighted in banging things about with a hammer, and later, when I grew to the schoolboy age, a chisel was my favourite weapon and a saw my constant companion, so I felt quite confident that I was just the very man for the place. I applied, and got the job.

In spite of my conceit, however, I felt very nervous when the day arrived on which I had to begin my work. I was at the appointed place a full half-hour before my time, tramping up and down in front of the empty houses, wondering what I would have to do to them. I could tell you the numbers of those houses, and the street they are in, and even the names of the people who open the gate that I hung on its hinges, and who lean up against the fence I erected, and gossip; but I like those people, and would not for the world have them worried by sightseers and inquirers; nor would I have the vulgar populace staring with

vacant eyes at my handiwork. No, I like to walk past there myself and let that glow of pride, which comes to me as I gaze at them, flush me in secret.

At eight o'clock my fellow-worker arrived, and, after a critical survey of me, he asked if I were the new man, and on my explaining that I was, he had the impertinence to inquire if I knew anything about carpentering. I was piqued, and said "No," very sharply.

To my astonishment he said, "Neither do I," and swung open the gate and walked into the empty house. From that moment we were fast friends, and between us we papered, white-washed, and thoroughly repaired those two houses, which, as I have already hinted, are still standing and still occupied.

When I was a boy my father once told me that "nobody was too old to learn." I don't say that he invented the phrase, but I thought it was fine at the time, and, like all young impressions, it clung to me, and I have been surprised oftentimes since by the truth of my father's remark. After I had finished my house-repairing job I applied his maxim, and decided never to refuse to take on anything.

Had I been timid or over-truthful I would never have become a carpenter and house-decorator, nor would I have been able to relieve my friend Johnston of an unpaying guest, nor become the proud possessor of some six pounds hard-earned money.

Out of this fabulous sum I paid my friend at the rate of ten shillings a week for my board and lodging for the time I had been a carpenter and unable to milk his cows, and with the balance I decided to face the world and see what would happen.

Before departing from his hospitable roof I had decided to do the thing properly. I wanted to go on the Wallaby, as I had read so much about it. So my friend showed me how to roll my clothes up in the orthodox blue blanket (always be orthodox in a new country), and how to strap the two ends of it so that the shoulder-straps would lie evenly, and then he placed it on my back and surveyed it. His wife carefully put it straight and tucked in the corner of one of my shirts which peeped through the fold, saying her husband was clumsy, and then she patted it and said I looked fine.

It is wonderful how light a heavy bundle is when

you get it fair and square in the middle of your back, and how easily you can walk with it. The Australian swagmen carry theirs across one shoulder, but I prefer the New Zealand method, as the weight is more evenly distributed and your arms are free to swing, which is a great thing if you have much walking to do.

“Come back whenever you like!” cried Johnston, as I waved my hand and disappeared in the morning mist; and I heard his wife add: “Yes, do.”

As I swung along the road I felt much pleased with myself. New Zealand, I began to think, was an excellent place and the people most hospitable; but I could not help wondering if I had been wise in starting out on a long—I felt sure it would be a long—tramp into unknown country and among unknown people. There was, however, a pleasant feeling in knowing that, though to all appearances I was a tramp, I had a friend at hand and about three pounds in my pocket. After careful consideration, I decided to avoid going near Auckland and to keep clear of the gum-fields. Auckland, being a town, had temptations, and temptations aren’t worth courting

when you've only got three pounds; and the gum-fields—well, I could not get that pessimistic passenger's prophecy out of my head, and had no particular desire to fulfil it for him. I mention this just to show you how carefully I had made my plans, and then to show how easily they were all upset. I was making for the Waikato, where I had heard that there were several large farms and that the Maoris were plentiful. So far I had hardly seen a dozen Maoris, and I was anxious to come across them in their wild state—I still thought they were wild in spite of my friend's assurance that they were quite tame, except when they were offered work.

For three hours I tramped on through some beautiful country, and at last, just as my shoulders were beginning to ache, I pulled up at a wayside inn, where, I regret to say, my career as a swagman came to an abrupt end. No sooner had I dropped my swag off my back than a jovial-looking farmer asked me if I were looking for work. Thinking he was only making conversation I answered him, quite casually, in the affirmative, and, stepping across to the bar, ordered a drink and some biscuits.



A FULL-BLOODED MAORI MAID

“ Looking for work—and praying you don’t get it, is that it? eh?” he laughed.

I turned on him.

“ What do you mean ?” I asked, glaring.

“ What I said, of course,” he replied, still laughing.

“ Then I’ll trouble you to mind your own business,” I said, feeling rather annoyed—for I could see two or three smiling about me.

“ Well, I’m hanged,” roared the farmer, looking round the bar, “if that ain’t cool. You offer a man a job and he insults you and tells you to mind your own business. A pretty condition the colony is coming to! I suppose we’ll soon have to go on our knees and beg the working man to come to us. Here’s a health to you, young fellow,” he added, raising his glass to me. “ You are just the sort of chap we want in this country.”

By now I had discovered that something was amiss.

“ I think that one of us is labouring under a wrong impression,” I said. “ I am certainly on the look-out for work or I would not be carrying that swag about on my back, and what is more, if any one likes to offer me a job, I shall be only too glad to take it.”

“Now, that’s sensible,” said the jovial farmer, “and I apologise if I’ve hurt your feelings. I guessed you were a new chum, so I ought to have made my offer more plain.”

“Then, if it is still an offer, I’m your man,” said I, swallowing my annoyance, for really I was quite looking forward to that long tramp into the country, and here it was going to be cut short—nipped in the bud.

“Well, I want a man up at my place, and you look pretty strong. Can you ride and drive?”

“Yes,” I answered.

“All right, then; be at my place on Monday morning, and I’ll put you to work.”

The address he gave me showed me that he thought I was going to walk there. I knew the train from Auckland would get me to it in an hour or so, and feeling that I could now safely let my three pounds fly I decided to say nothing, but spend a few days in town, and then on Monday take train to Hamilton.

Bidding my new employer good-bye, I made for the nearest station, and was soon in Auckland, where I hailed a cab and drove, swag and all, to the Victoria Hotel. After changing my clothes

(for I had set out in working man's attire), I made for the first tea-shop I could find, and there I sat and pondered, and gazed at the bright young things that came and went.

It was a very different afternoon from what I had expected, but my disappointment, if I had any, soon disappeared amid my pleasant surroundings, and my last spasm of regret at the change in events was suddenly dispersed by the entry of two laughing girls, one being the girl at whose feet I had grovelled on my first day in New Zealand.

In a moment I had left my seat ; the next instant I was shaking hands with the beautiful Miss Frazer. (Her name was not really Frazer, but it matters very little ; she is just as nice under any name.) She and her friend had been shopping, and were loaded up with small parcels, of which I naturally relieved them, and also naturally I conducted them to the table at which I had been sitting. I suppose I looked glad to see them, for Miss Frazer immediately accused me of resembling a truant schoolboy. "In fact," she said, "I was told only half an hour ago that you had started off on the Wallaby in search of work. . . . Is

this the sort of work you were after?" she added.

"Appearances are against me, but the truth is I have already secured work on a farm in the Waikato, and——"

"And you are breaking your journey here. A very good plan," she added, with a disbelieving smile.

At that moment our conversation was interrupted by the waitress who came for orders.

"The man I am going to work for is Mr. Framlin," I said; "here is his address."

Miss Frazer looked at her friend, and the two smiled.

"You know him?" I asked.

"Yes, and his daughters; they are splendid tennis-players."

"Oh, joy!" I exclaimed.

"But you don't for a moment suppose Mr. Framlin will allow you to play with them, do you?"

My face must have shown my surprise.

"Ah, I see," she said, "you have the prevalent English idea that a New Zealand farmer treats his men as guests."

"Well, not exactly," I said, "but——"

"Permits tennis, eh?" she laughed heartily. "I'm afraid you'll find that Mr. Framlin is rather different from what you expect, but I don't want to put you off."

I remember I smiled in a superior way. As if she could put me off!

"He works his men most awfully hard," continued Miss Frazer. "You will have to get up at six o'clock and milk no end of cows, and then probably you'll have to drive the milk-cart into town; eight miles, isn't it, Dolly?" she said, turning to her companion.

"Yes," replied Dolly, "and such a brute of a horse. Don't you remember how poor Jack got his leg broken when it bolted and ran into Dr. Weymouth's gate?"

"Yes. Then when you get back," continued Miss Frazer, "you'll have all the cowsheds to clean, and the pig-sties to do out, and the fowl-houses to whitewash, and the——"

"What about meals?" I asked, interrupting her flow of language.

"That's just what Jack used to say," put in Dolly.

"You kind of pick them up at odd moments,"

said Miss Frazer ; " but still, it may be better now. It's a year ago since Jack was there."

" The dickens !" I exclaimed, " are all farmers like him ? "

" Most of the small ones are," said Miss Frazer ; " but I don't want to put you off," she repeated, lifting a piece of buttered toast from her plate. " It will be an experience—I suppose that's what you have come here for—but it's a pity you have to go on Monday," she added, " as we've got a tennis party on, and we would have been so pleased to have had another man."

" Oh yes," said Miss Dolly Pain, " can't you stay for it ? We are so short of men."

" Our two best players went off to the country last week. Why do all you men go to the country ? There's plenty of work in town, and it's much cleaner."

" Miss Frazer," I said solemnly, " how long would the prosperity of New Zealand last if all the men stayed in town and played tennis ? Where would the beautiful corn-fields be ? where the fat oxen and the sheep and lambs that gambol in the grass ? "

" That sounds very nice," replied Miss Frazer,

“ but your remaining a day extra in town won’t interfere with the gambols, will it? Why not go on Tuesday ? ”

“ Miss Frazer,” I said sternly, “ if I studied my inclination I would accept your kind invitation ; but I came to New Zealand to work ; and, another thing, I have not got any flannels in town. The whole of my kit here consists of the clothes you see me in and a pair of working trousers, two shirts, and a blanket.”

“ Then if you had your clothes would you come ? ” she asked.

Feeling safe, I answered “ Yes.”

“ Dolly,” said Miss Frazer, turning triumphantly to her friend, “ Jack’s clothes will fit him to a ‘ T.’ ”

“ So they will,” said Miss Pain. I saw that I had made a false move.

Ten minutes later my friends bade me good-bye.

“ Don’t forget to send that wire to Mr. Framlin, will you ? ” said Miss Frazer, “ and come early.”

“ Miss Frazer,” I remarked, holding her hand, “ excuse me, but is your name Eve ? ”

“ No,” said she, looking straight at me and smiling, “ it’s Mabel. Why ? ”

* * * * *

Auckland on a bright, sunny afternoon is a most fascinating place, and as I wandered down Queen Street I began to wish I had never accepted Mr. Framlin's job. Presently the strains of a band reached me, and on inquiry I learned that it was playing in the park ; so I made my way there and was delighted to find a gay crowd of brightly dressed people sitting about, enjoying the beautiful sunshine and the music. It is a lovely little park ; not much bigger than a large London square, but prettily laid out with flowers of the richest colour and shrubs laden with blossom and rich in perfume. The band was a good one and the music soothing, so I picked out the most comfortable chair I could find and lit a cigar. By my side was a young man who struck me as being of a genial nature, though somewhat tired ; so I offered him my case.

“ Thanks,” said he, picking out one of the best it contained. “ You have not been in New Zealand long, I see. I know these cigars. I smuggled some here myself from Teneriffe.”

“ Then you are from England, too ! ” I exclaimed.

“ Yes,” said he. “ I wish to goodness I was back there.”

"I'm just beginning to like the country," I retorted.

"So did I at first," he replied sorrowfully, "but one does long so for movement; they are all so darned slow here, and the theatres are terrible, and the colonials so rough, and the cooking is vile, and the beer——"

"Here, steady!" I cried, "don't turn me off the country in one breath. Break it gently."

"Oh, you needn't fear, you'll be full up with it in another month or so," he replied, unabashed.

"How long did the 'filling up' process take you?"

"I've been here three months and got sick of it in three weeks."

"Can't you get work?"

"Oh yes, there's plenty of work of a kind, but I don't want it. I'm supposed to be an insurance agent. You don't happen to want your life insured, do you?" he asked in slow and sleepy tones.

"No, I don't," I replied.

"There, that's just what every one says."

"Tell me," I said, for a sudden idea had struck me, "is it hard to get a job as an insurance agent?"

"I got it through a friend. He does all right,

but every one I come across has either been insured or won't be, and it's so beastly rude to bother them. My friend puts in about three cases a week ; but then he's got no manners."

"How much does he get for each case?" I asked.

"It all depends. He makes about a fiver a week, I think. Hang it, there he is!" He raised his hand and beckoned him.

"Here, Halstead, let me introduce you to a pal of mine who wants to become an insurance agent. He's a splendid worrier and should do well. Could you get him my job? I'm tired of it."

His friend laughed. "Don't mind him," he said, as he thought I looked annoyed. "You are just about the laziest beggar I ever came across," he added, glancing at his friend. He turned to me again. "Are you a remittance man?"

"No," I said. "I have to earn my living."

"Then I'll put you through your paces," he answered, "but I'm hanged if I'll ever bother my head about remittance men any more. Look at him," he exclaimed scornfully, "he sits there half the day and expects people to come and insure themselves, so that he can draw the money. All



THE LITTLE ONES' BATH, OHINEMUTA

remittance men are alike," continued this voluble man. "They lounge about waiting for mail day to bring their money, then they pay up their hotel bills and go on the burst for a couple of days, and then wait for the next mail, and so on. They are the curse of the country, and if I were the Premier I would class them as undesirables and keep them away. If I were at home and had a son I particularly disliked and wanted to ruin, I would send him out here and give him a remittance, and if that didn't finish him I would believe I had misjudged him."

"Here, sit down, old chap!" cried the languid one, "and try a cigarette. You are spoiling the music. You are so damned energetic—you don't rest. Take example by the Governor there; you see he's fast asleep."

I glanced across in the direction in which my friend was looking, and saw an elderly man wearing a soft hat and a dark tweed suit of clothes. He was not asleep.

"Where is his house?" I asked.

"Just at the back here," said my friend, pointing over his shoulder. "I wouldn't mind his job at all. Five thousand a year and two decent places

to live in and nothing to do but save money—at least that's what the New Zealanders reckon the Governor comes here for."

Halstead looked at me and laughed.

"If you take what he says for gospel you'll get a queer idea of the colony. Think of the buns that are consumed at his garden parties," he added, "and the expense of maintaining the gardens and his daughters."

The languid man looked contemptuously at his friend.

"My boy," he said, "you've never been there and you don't know him or his family."

"Have you attended?" I asked.

"Sir," said he, "I am not a shop-keeper, nor am I a Maori princess. I am merely an insurance agent."

"And a disgrace to the profession," put in Halstead.

"Look here," he said, turning to me, "would you really like to take his job? It's no good to him, and I'm an inspector and can put you on—that is if you'll promise to work."

"I'll certainly promise to do my best," I said, "but I can't vouch for the result."

"You'll do all right," said Halstead encouragingly, 'if you stick at it. I'll take you round for a few days and teach you the tricks of the trade."

The languid one brightened up.

"Good morning, madam; please I'm representing the Government Insurance Company," he said in mock solemnity, "'and I want to know if——' that's about as far as you'll get, for the door generally slams then, and you've got to watch yourself. Oh yes, you'll have an awfully jolly time of it, I promise you."

"Shut up," cried Halstead good-humouredly. "Shall I tell you how much he's earned this month?" he added, turning to me. "Five pounds! and that was a charity case. An old woman took a fancy to him because he told her a lie and said he came from Yorkshire, and so she insured her son. But come along, I'm going to the office and will fix you up if you mean business."

"Right," I exclaimed, for I saw endless games of tennis and pleasant afternoon teas looming in the distance, and somehow they dulled my ambition for a country life with a bolting horse and dirty cow-sheds.

At six o'clock that evening I wired to Mr.

Framlin telling him never to expect me. As soon as that was done I took train to Onehunga, told Mr. Johnston of my new job, secured my boxes and moved into a comfortable boarding-house not far from the park ; and that night I fell asleep dreaming of Eve.

CHAPTER III

The result of a broken resolution—The world's playground—Some errors corrected—A glimpse of home life—New Zealand of to-day and a moonlight ride.

I HAVE often wondered if that cup of tea I had in Chapter II. was the cause of my subsequent wanderings, was, in fact, the turning-point of my career of drift, or if that tempting Eve, with her brown eyes and her invitation to the tennis-party, started me on a course I had no intention whatever of following when I left the fogs of London to try my luck under the Southern Cross. I know what my grandmother would have said had she been alive. She would have condemned those brown eyes at once, and, with unerring precision, would have traced all my future failings (or crimes, she would have called them) back to that one act. She would have shown me how, if I had only gone straight to Mr. Framlin's, instead of leading him to suppose I had not the railway fare, and

had begun work as the boys in the Sunday-school books do, I would now be a wealthy squatter with six children and Miss Framlin as my wife. The line she would have mapped out for me would, no doubt, have been the correct one; but in real life who follows the correct line? and personally I enjoyed that cup of tea and its results. They were certainly interesting, though at times harrowing; but, on looking back, I cannot say that I regret my little act of deception, or that I hanker after those six children and their mamma.

Halstead, I found, was a most amusing companion, and he soon taught me the tricks of the trade, and how to entice unsuspecting people to insure their lives. In the morning we would start out about eleven o'clock and spend two hours calling on likely people and explaining to them the benefits of life insurance. Like all agents, Halstead had "a way with him," and when once he got his foot inside a house people found him hard to get rid of; but he was very amusing, and made great friends with every one he met. He possessed splendid spirits, and never believed in over-work.

"Don't ever let yourself get tired; it's a waste of time and energy," he once remarked, after

having met with three rebuffs in one morning.
"Let's go and play billiards."

I remember at the time I thought his philosophy was absurd, but since then I must confess that I have found his principle an excellent one, and in the various callings, professions, and trades which I have sampled I have invariably adopted it. What was also more to the point just then, it allowed me plenty of time to see things, and, when weighed in the balance, what are a few pounds a week more or less compared with the delight of seeing life and enjoying the endless beauties of this little world of ours ?

No one need fear he will starve in New Zealand provided he does not let opportunities slip, and any one can make a living there if he does not mind working, be he a mechanic, a tradesman, or even a public schoolboy.

Halstead never worked in the afternoon unless it was thrust upon him. He knew dozens of good people, and spent his time after lunch in playing cricket and tennis, watching races, going to picnics, or reading at the library.

There is always plenty doing in Auckland, both in the summer and winter, and provided you get

to know one decent person, you are soon introduced to others, and can enjoy all there is to enjoy.

With Miss Frazer and Halstead at the back of me I soon knew quite a lot of people and was able to pass my days very nicely. The New Zealanders are essentially an out-door race, which accounts for their success in the world of sport. When a big football match is going to be played the ground is packed with people, thousands turn out to witness it, and, if it be an international match, you will find it difficult to get served in any shop in town, for every one is watching the game. At midday, when a match is on, Queen Street is thronged with crowds on their way out ; waggons, coaches, and flies line the streets, and the drivers yelling their destination and fare are enough in themselves to excite the least enthusiastic and drag them from their work. No sooner have they raced one load out than they tear back for another lot, and go on till the match begins ; but then they stop, for they would sacrifice a dozen fares rather than miss the game. On a race day it is the same ; in fact, they have "Derby Days" once a week in Auckland, and the gate money mounts up to an astounding figure. I have been

to a good many race meetings in different parts of the colony, but have come to the conclusion that the Auckland course (at Ellerslie) takes a lot of beating. There is hardly a course I know of which is better patronised, by really nice people brimful of enthusiasm.

Yachting is another pastime on which Aucklanders are particularly keen, and on sunny afternoons their beautiful harbour is alive with smart little craft. Every bay and inlet has its party of picnickers, and, when the regatta is on, the harbour is a sight worth seeing ; in spite of the hungry sharks that infest its waters, there are very few who are too timid to take the chances of an upset. During the summer-time excursion boats run to the different islands, taking parties there in the morning and returning for them in the evening. The same boats ply between Auckland and the North Shore every few minutes in the day, for many business men live over the water in preference to sleeping in the town where they work. What is called the North Shore is the shore facing Auckland. Sydney has a North Shore too, and I remember once coming across a strange mistake made by an English editor in his journal regarding these two

North Shores. A correspondent had written to inquire his best way to get to Auckland (N.Z.), and the reply was: "Take the P. & O. to Sydney and then ferry across. The boats run every five minutes."

This display of innocence, or ignorance, reminds me of another extraordinary error. It happened in one of our illustrated weeklies, at the time the Duke of York was touring in the colonies. A photo of Lyttelton Harbour was described as Hobart-town and called the capital of New Zealand. Even that has since been eclipsed by a writer in whose book I read a graphic description of the New Zealand bush when the autumn leaves were falling and the brown and yellow and gold tints were caught by the sinking sun, etc., etc. Had he been there he would have known that the New Zealand trees are evergreen, that the bush is the same in the winter and the summer, except under foot. The same author also thought the Maoris were savages and lived in the bush, a thing which they never do if they can help it, for the uneducated ones still have a superstition that the Tipu (devil) lurks there and prowls about at night ready to pounce on the unwary. But enough of other people's ignorance,



THE EVER-GREEN BUSH

At the appointed hour on Monday I arrived at Miss Frazer's house, and found that, though I was up to time, play had already begun. After the usual introductions I found myself sitting next to an English girl who had been away from home for about two years (Why is it that every one in another country will insist on introducing you to your own countrymen? Surely you go away for a change?). She was very stiff, and by her whole attitude showed that she resented everything colonial.

"Aren't they dreadfully loud?" she exclaimed in a languid voice, quite within earshot of at least three New Zealanders.

"I know so little about them," I replied; "I have only just arrived."

"But can't you see at a glance how common they are?" she persisted, looking sorry for me.

"They seem happy enough, in spite of it," I suggested; but she only tossed her head.

"Before they've known you five minutes they call you by your Christian name, ask you to their houses, and then copy the pattern of your dress."

"Still, their houses are nice," I managed to squeeze in.

“ Houses ! ” She gave a contemptuous sniff. “ Wooden huts, you mean ! ”

“ They call them bungalows,” I ventured. “ I wish we had them in England. It would be so nice to sit out on the big verandah and sip our coffee, and gaze out at the setting sun, and——”

“ Catch our death of cold,” she snapped.

“ Ah yes, I forgot. We have such a wretched climate compared with this. Fancy a tennis-party in March at home ! Fancy sitting under broad spreading fern-trees, drinking afternoon tea,” I continued spitefully, “ and listening to soft music——” Somebody was playing in the drawing-room and the sound reached us through the open windows.

Miss — (I forget her name) looked scornfully at me. “ And fancy these people in England—the leaders of society,” she snapped.

“ Oh yes,” I ventured ; “ society is certainly different here : position, not birth, takes precedence, and a man is judged by what he is, and not what he wears or what his father was. It is a wonderful place if you want to find your own market value, isn’t it ? ”

I don’t know what my companion’s answer was,

for at that moment Miss Frazer came up and I seized the opportunity to escape.

“I want you,” I said, “to show me over your house. I have not yet been in such a large one.”

“Well, I’m afraid you must wait, as I want you to play tennis,” said Miss Frazer, smiling. “You shall see the house later; but really, it is just like a four-storeyed English one squeezed down to two storeys and spread out on both sides, with a big verandah run round two sides of it. The furniture is lighter perhaps, and decidedly cheaper, but otherwise everything is much the same, barring the servants’ hall—owing no doubt to the fact that domestics are scarce.”

“But people do have them here,” I said.

“Oh yes; we have two sometimes, when we are lucky. If we haven’t it doesn’t matter much—we can get through the work ourselves, and it’s rather fun.”

“And the garden?” I queried.

“I do it chiefly, but we have a gardener twice a week. Now I hope you know all about us,” she added, smiling, “for here we are at the court, and you’ve got to be my partner, and if you

don't succeed in helping me beat the others I won't tell you anything more about our little island."

In spite of the excessive heat—I believe it was about 90° in the shade—I managed to win a certain amount of praise from my exacting partner when, after a hot fight, we beat our opponents by one game.

"Now," said Miss Frazer, "I suppose you must go or Mr. Framlin will be wiring for you."

"Miss Frazer," I said, "I have come to the conclusion that you were right, and that one man more or less in town will not affect the prosperity of New Zealand, so I am stopping here. Can I insure your life?"

"How awful of you!" she exclaimed. "But I'm glad, though. How quickly you secured another billet."

"I had to, for I had not the courage to face the Johnstons to ask for my clothes until I had one, but I didn't tell them I met you, nor that you converted me from a milkman into an insurance agent. In the interests of society and the world," I explained, "I want to know as much about Auckland as there is to know: hence my desire

to stop in it. In fact, I am here to-day with the sole object of seeing how you live and enjoy yourselves on this side of the globe," I added, lest she might think she had persuaded me to do wrong.

"Your candour shall receive its reward," said Miss Frazer, smiling, "and if you like I will tell you the history of every one in this garden."

"Pray don't," I implored.

"But in the interests of society and the world," she persisted. "There is Miss —. Her mother, forty years ago, kept a small sweet-shop in Queen Street, and now she is an heiress and a catch, and one of the most delightful girls I know. Her friend over there came from Sydney; her father was a miner and made his pile—hence her silk blouse. Shall I go on? You see that stout lady: her mother used to run about barefooted in London and came here as a domestic servant; she married a magistrate, and now this generation lives at Remuera and entertains all the celebrities who come here. Miss — there is a half-caste. Her mother was a full-blooded, tattooed Maori when Colonel — fell in love with her and her land,

and there is the result—as charming a girl as any one could wish to know. Mr. ——”

“ Spare me !” I pleaded. “ I see tea is ready. Can I get you some ?”

“ If you are thirsty, yes.”

“ And whilst we are drinking it, you can go on and tell me who the men are,” I said.

“ The men are chiefly in business. There are practically no idlers here. One is a stockbroker, one an architect, one an actor, and one is of your fraternity, an insurance agent, and that little man over there with the dark moustache is the editor of *The Star*. That stout, jolly-looking man is on a mining journal ; and has been twice in prison for criminal libel ; he came here from *The Sydney Bulletin*, and prior to that has been on the staff of half the papers in London, Paris, and New York. For variety,” added Miss Frazer, “ you can’t beat New Zealand tea-fights.”

* * * * *

About a week after this introduction into Auckland society I was riding my bicycle past the Frazers’ at about eight in the evening. It was a glorious moonlight night, so bright that one could

read a newspaper easily. I was surprised to see about half a dozen bicycles leaning against their fence, and just as I was hesitating whether I should go past or stop I heard my name called, and saw Miss Frazer coming down the path with two other girls and two men.

"We are just going for a moonlight ride to Orakei Bay," cried Miss Frazer. "Will you join us?"

Needless to say I did, and a more enjoyable evening I can hardly remember. For some miles we whizzed along a beautiful even road till at last the outskirts of Auckland were reached, and then by devious ways we came to an almost wild spot. It looked as if, in the rush for the soil, this little nook had been forgotten.

Owing to the dust of the road, or other reasons that were not explained, our party had got split up, and I found, on looking back, that Miss Frazer and I were alone; but, fearing to frighten her, I said nothing. I didn't know in those days how independent the New Zealanders are. Presently we dismounted, and, leaving our bikes on the roadside, we took a narrow path through a small clump of bush, and, after travelling along it for a

few minutes, we came out on the edge of a cliff, and there, right before us, lay Auckland Harbour, bathed in the most glorious moonlight.

I was so astounded at the beautiful sight that I could say nothing.

“Is there anything to beat that in dear old England?” asked Miss Frazer.

I had to confess that if there were I had never seen it.

“Then sit down and take it all in,” she replied, “and don’t talk.”

There was hardly any need to add that, for there was something so impressive about the scene that words would have sounded out of place, and had I been compelled to talk I should have done so in a whisper.

Beneath us, and spreading out right and left, was a perfectly calm sea, lit up so brightly that one could look right into it. Ships lay placidly at anchor, and the ferry-boats plied backwards and forwards from the wharf to the North Shore. Rangitoto, a grim, dark mountain which faces Auckland and looks as if it had been thrown up out of the sea, appeared like a gigantic monarch guarding a magnificent picture. Far away to the

right the dim outline of coast and blue hills gave a finishing touch to the scene, and softened away its edges into uncertainty. Presently an excursion-boat rounded Rangitoto, and its lights danced on the clear water. A band was playing on board, and sounded strangely beautiful in the distance. It was all like a scene in a play, as everything looked so small from our view-ground. I watched the excursion-boat ; it crept along round the bend like a little live thing, and then, panting, it came towards us into the harbour and crossed it slowly, leaving a white trail behind. The music grew louder, and I could see people moving about. Then there was silence, and presently a bell rang out as the engines slackened down, and the boat disappeared, hidden by the cliff.

For some moments we sat on in silence, and the sounds from the boats came up to us mingled with the voices of a party of merry-makers down on the rocks below. The steady *chunk-chunk* of a rower out in the bay was borne across the water, and the voice of a sailor singing as he rowed to his ship brought the reality of the scene home to us.

Presently we heard a faint *coo-ee* from behind.

Miss Frazer started. "That's our party," she said, springing up and answering the call.

In a few minutes the silence was broken, and we were all making for our bicycles, and the bay looked like other bays, and the moon like other moons, but for the life of me I could find nothing to say during my ride back to town.

CHAPTER IV

Auckland's show places—Mount Eden—Some hints to librarians—
The Museum, the Domain—Some newspapers and some experiences, and the reiteration of a well-proved fact.

THE chief show places in Auckland are the Museum, the Library, and Mount Eden, and of course the harbour. But if you are anxious to start with a good impression of the town, walk, drive, or cycle to the top of Mount Eden as soon as ever you can, as you are certain to be asked if you have been there, and if you have not, then say you have, or you will have to listen to indifferent descriptions of the beauty of the view from its summit. Mount Eden lies at the back of the town, and—dare I say it?—looks like an ordinary hill; it is of no great height, and, to the unsuspecting, not worth going up; but, when once on its crest, or, properly speaking, the edge of its crater, a finer view you could not wish to see. I was never so surprised in all my life as when I got to the top. On all sides there

are scenes which defy description, and you gaze about, not knowing which way to look first, but endeavouring to take them all in at a glance, till the eye is tired and the brain confused, and then you settle down and take each picture as it comes. For a moment you think you are on an island; for as you follow the harbour round it joins a river, and, from your eminence, seems as if it ran right into Manukau Harbour on the other side of the island. Then the eye travels to a wide expanse of sea, and then back to the land, which is all cut up into small paddocks divided from one another by stone walls. There are scoriæ everywhere, and boulders of immense size, which remind you that at one time Mount Eden was a volcano; instinctively you look for the crater. It is like a great brown basin, weird and uncanny, and you crane your neck to see into its depths. Your eye follows the windings of the lava till it terminates at the bottom. You become giddy, the even markings of its sides fascinate your eyes, and you wonder what the crust at the bottom hides. You go nearer the edge, and you picture the boiling, tossing furnace that at one time roared and belched and threw great masses of rock into the air to roll down the

mountain sides. You can almost picture the steaming, scalding liquid that poured from this cauldron and burnt up the grass and trees; you shudder, and a fear steals over you that it may begin again. You start back as some unfamiliar sound disturbs you, and then your eye catches sight of the little farm, lying snugly at the foot of the mountain. You see the thin line of blue smoke rising from its chimney and hear the gentle tinkling of a sheep-bell, and the peace of this quiet spot soothes you, and your fear dies, as the angry fires of Mount Eden died, never to live again.

Variety and colour make New Zealand a land of beautiful scenes. Colours exist which, if it were possible to reproduce them on canvas, would look glaring and improbable, but, given the vastness which the clear atmosphere allows, the blending is harmonious and beautiful.

In New Zealand you can see for miles further than anywhere else, and objects that look quite close may be ten, twenty, or fifty miles away. I remember once in Taranaki being terribly taken in when trying to judge distance. I was staying at a township just outside New Plymouth with the editor of the local paper, and one afternoon I was gazing

at Mount Egmont with its snow-capped top. It was a broiling hot day, and I was suddenly seized with a desire to climb this mountain and get cool. We had just finished our midday meal, and when I told my friend where I was going he smiled placidly. Knowing how New Zealanders object to walking I took no notice of him, and when he asked how long I would be I only told him I should return in time for tea. Again he smiled, but said nothing. I judged the distance myself at about four miles, and started off full of energy. I tramped and tramped and tramped, and as I covered each dusty mile that blessed mountain receded two, till I began to think it was a mirage, and finally, tired and worn out, I made for a farm and asked there for some tea; then casually inquired how far it was to Mount Egmont. The answer was:

“Twelve miles.”

I reckoned I had walked seven already, and as I sat down to my tea it dawned on me why that editor smiled.

Needless to say, I returned home, and have never since attempted to climb Mount Egmont.

Mount Eden, however, is neither hard to climb nor difficult to get at:

The next thing to see is the Free Library, which, unlike our English ones, is about as comfortable a place as you could desire in which to spend a few hours. It owes its existence and many of its valuable books to the benevolence of Sir George Grey (or "Good Governor Grey," as he was always called), and probably many of its other advantages. Besides having a magnificent collection of reference books, it has quite an up-to-date lending library, which is well managed and well patronised by the reading class, and the books are clean. What struck me so favourably was the way the whole place was run. There is no waiting or filling in of wretched slips of paper and handing them to sleepy librarians, and then having to race off to your lunch or tea before the book has been found. You simply walk into the reading-room, sit down in a comfortable chair, and take whichever book you want from the shelves. These are arranged in projections from the walls, and between each two projections is a table with six or eight chairs, so that you choose one between the shelves on which you know your books to be, and when you have read them you leave them on the table, and the attendant returns them to their places. In this way

no end of trouble is saved, both for the librarians and for the readers. If, however, you do not know where to find the books you require, an attendant will show you.

The lending department is conducted on the same principle as English libraries. There is only one thing lacking to make the Auckland library perfect, and that is permission to smoke whilst reading. I am convinced that if a smoking-room were attached to all public libraries knowledge would be far better distributed, and men who would otherwise never dream of reading in a library would go there and so learn many useful things. How can a smoker sit for hours studying a subject in an uncomfortable chair unless he has his pipe with him? Personally, I am convinced that the ignorance of the working classes is solely due to lack of smoking-rooms in libraries, and if men like Mr. Carnegie and other library-founders would only institute them we would soon get rid of a lot of ignorance and the Liberal Government.

The Museum is an excellent one, and easily reached, so that any one arriving in Auckland by boat, who has a few hours to spend, cannot do better than visit it. I have seen people hurrying

along Queen Street, up Shortland Street, where they call in at the post office for letters, and have watched them pant up the hill, from which a fine view of the harbour is obtained, and enter the Museum, which has the advantage of being only a short distance from the park, where tourists can eat their sandwiches and think of the wonderful things they have seen.

There are here a model Maori meeting-house, a beautifully carved war canoe, Maori weapons of all descriptions, and dozens of other unique things that cannot be seen anywhere else. Amongst other objects of interest in this Museum, there are some of the best samples of Maori carving, and as the Maoris were far and away the best savage carvers in the world, it is well to make a point of seeing some of their work. To the most casual observer it becomes evident that time was of no consideration to those who devoted their lives to this art. The prow of a canoe might represent years of labour, the posts of a meeting-house would occupy one man for at least eight or nine months, and yet, in spite of this, carving is to be seen on almost everything possessed by a Maori. It has been said that the crude instruments they used in early

days accounted for the length of time they took to produce a masterpiece, but I am inclined to think that it was their delight in getting the designs perfect, as they are a race in which thoroughness is a strong point. The same care and industry is shown in the making of their old weapons of war and of sport, and the Museum is the only place where these can be seen, as the Maoris no longer make them, except those specially prepared for sale to tourists and for presents to dukes.

The last time I was in Auckland I took a young Maori friend of mine there to show them to him, as there were some he had never heard of, including the famous long spear which the natives used in hunting birds. It is a long, thin, beautifully pointed and finely balanced spear, about thirty feet long, and it took a man about two months to make it, and half his lifetime to learn how to use it with that skill and proficiency which made aiming a certainty. At bird-hunting the Maoris were marvellous, and could creep through the most tangled bush with these long spears so silently that the birds were undisturbed until they found themselves pinned. Spearing birds under these circumstances must have



A MAORI CARVER AT WORK

been as bad as trying to swing the proverbial cat in an up-to-date Kensington flat. It is hard enough trying to walk in the bush, and no sane man, unless for business purposes, would dream of leaving the track, or attempting to make a new one, if he desired to get home with his clothes on, but the Maoris would travel through the densest parts with little inconvenience—but of the bush and Maoris anon. Let us get into the Domain, where sports, shows, bicycle races, cricket matches, volunteer parades, and other vices are carried on. It is here that our great-great-grand-children will have to go to see what the New Zealand bush was like, for it is, I think, the only place in the islands where the native trees and shrubs may not be touched. A wise Government, years ago, made it a preserve, and only the centre is allowed to be looked after by gardeners. All the rest of it—and it is a very big place—grows wild, and contains specimens of nearly all the native trees in their proper surroundings, and the only things that are likely to destroy it are loving couples. These people seem to have a thirst for finding out the densest parts to whisper their sweet nothings into each other's

ears, and the undergrowth suffers, and the young trees, unused to being trampled on, show their resentment by dying. But perhaps this difficulty may yet be overcome, as the Government is a progressive one, and has the interests of the people and the country at heart, and no doubt a special lovers' walk, made of briar bushes, fallen trees, and other obstacles, may one day be cultivated.

I don't know why I should jump from lovers' walks in the Domain to *The Auckland Herald* office, except that I remember trying to persuade one of the staff of that journal to put an article of mine, on the subject, in its valuable columns. I believe if I tried once I tried a dozen times to get on to that paper, but never succeeded; in fact, it got quite a habit of mine. Whenever I returned to Auckland I went straight there and asked for a job. I left Auckland five times, and on each occasion swore I would not waste any more time in it, but it is such a fascinating place that I could not keep away from it. My ambition in those days was to become a reporter on a newspaper, but it was many years after I first conceived this laudable fancy that an editor took compassion on me and gave me a job, and then I honestly

believe it was my face and not my literary abilities which procured me the post. The proprietor was a bluff, red-faced, jovial man who was always smiling. He had been approached by certain clergymen to start a Church paper, and, feeling that he did not look like an editor of such an organ, he chose me because I was, as he termed me, "more of a clerical-looking cuss than he." The man, however, who really did the editing was a tremendously big fellow that could drink more beer than any one man I have ever met. I remember reading a paragraph in one of the local papers cracking up an hotel, and in order to let the world know its exact position the paragraph explained that there was a well-worn track leading from the office of our Church paper right to the bar-parlour door. They did not like us, and if by chance the staff (the other fellow, the compositor, and myself) happened to go out, we invariably found a notice pinned on the door: "Gone to the pub; back in ten minutes." Needless to say, that paper did not live long; the Church of England withdrew the patronage it had promised, and, as a last resort, we made it into a Non-conformist and Catholic organ, and then, two

months later, wrote its obituary notice. That was my introduction into the world of papers and letters; since then I've tried no other world.

To get back to *The Auckland Herald* office. The reason I hankered after a position there was that I thought, and still think, it is one of the best papers in the colony. The building alone is impressive, and its internal arrangements would make an English newspaper office blush with shame; it is miles ahead of the stuffy, badly arranged, draughty and uninteresting offices in London. I have been on the staff of five of them, but for comfort and convenience give me *The Auckland Herald*. If I remember rightly, the whole of the corridors are arranged with windows on one side and bookshelves on the other. I don't know how many volumes there are in them, but what you can't find there, from a newspaper man's point of view, isn't worth looking for, and the books are so arranged that you can put your hand on what you want very easily. Now the disadvantage about the libraries in the London offices—a good few of them haven't any—is that you've first got to find the librarian (it's generally a she), and if she isn't mending her hat or making afternoon tea, she'll be out shopping; but

if you are lucky and she isn't any of these, or ill, and you manage to get hold of her, she generally tells you that she hasn't got the book you require, but if you write it down she will try to get it ; which, to say the least, is exasperating if you have to write an article in a hurry and want to know something about the subject before doing so. It's really quite marvellous how so many articles are written, and it speaks volumes for the imagination of the writers ; for English editors have no respect for their staff, and will tell off a poor fellow (who lives at Brixton, and has never travelled except in a 'bus) to write a scathing article on "The Absurdity of Cultivating Sugar-beet in New Zealand," or on "The Disadvantages of Importing Coolies to the Rand" and "Kanakas to Queensland" ; and if the poor fellow can't do it he loses about eight and fivepence, and is scorned by his brother journalists.

At the *Herald* office things are run differently ; there is plenty of time to do your work, and not too many columns to fill. They are keen on descriptive work, and they report race meetings, football matches, and other events in a way that makes their readers think they have seen them. Their weekly edition also compares favourably with

any weekly newspaper in England ; I don't mean with *The Sphere*, *Tatler*, or *Sketch*—they are hardly newspapers.

The next important daily in Auckland is *The Evening Star*, from which office many weekly journals are issued. *The Herald* is the morning paper, and the other is, of course, the evening one. I know of no morning star, but why there should not be I cannot understand. Besides these two papers there are several other weeklies : one, *The Observer*, though very amusing, is decidedly rude, and secures its readers by gossiping about everybody, caricaturing the respectable residents of the town and country, and ridiculing everything. It is run on the same lines as *The Sydney Bulletin*, though it lacks that journal's humour and brilliancy. *The Bulletin* is the *Punch* of the Southern Seas, but many English people take it seriously and quote weird paragraphs from it, thinking that they are then expressing the views of Australia. *The Sydney Bulletin* is unique : it is against the Church and against the State ; it will ridicule the Opposition, has no respect for Nonconformists, abominates earnestness, scorns quacks, loathes humbugs, and, in fact, is against everybody and everything except

itself, and in the whole of its career it has only once had to change its tone, and that was during the Boer War, when it was found that the loyalty of Australia was not to be laughed at. Had it not done so, the world would have lost one of the smartest and most amusing papers in existence, because Australia is very loyal, though not nearly as loyal as New Zealand. New Zealand's loyalty is so absolutely real that I am convinced that nothing we could do to them would change their feelings. It is pure sentiment. No country has had more slights from irresponsible politicians than New Zealand, but through thick and thin the inhabitants have worshipped the "dear old country," and every New Zealander talks about England as "home," though he may never have been there, and possibly his own father was born in the colony. It makes no difference. His home is England, and always will be.

CHAPTER V

The Wonderland of New Zealand—Hot springs and good company—
The tale of Tarawera and the story of Hinemoa, the Maori maid
of Rotorua.

NEW ZEALAND is a land of surprises as well as a land of contrasts, and the Rotorua district is one of its chief surprises. In taking train there from Auckland you pass through some of the most beautiful parts of the Waikato district, where farms and peaceful homesteads, quaint townships, large wastes and swamps pass rapidly before your view. You get glimpses of beautiful bush in its wildest state, and then run on through pasture land, where cattle and sheep in their thousands graze and grow fat, and eventually find their way, *via* the freezing works, to our own dinner-tables—but you need not think of that as you whiz past them. On this trip you see country of nearly every description, and just as you are getting tired of it the train pulls up at the world-renowned health resort, Rotorua.

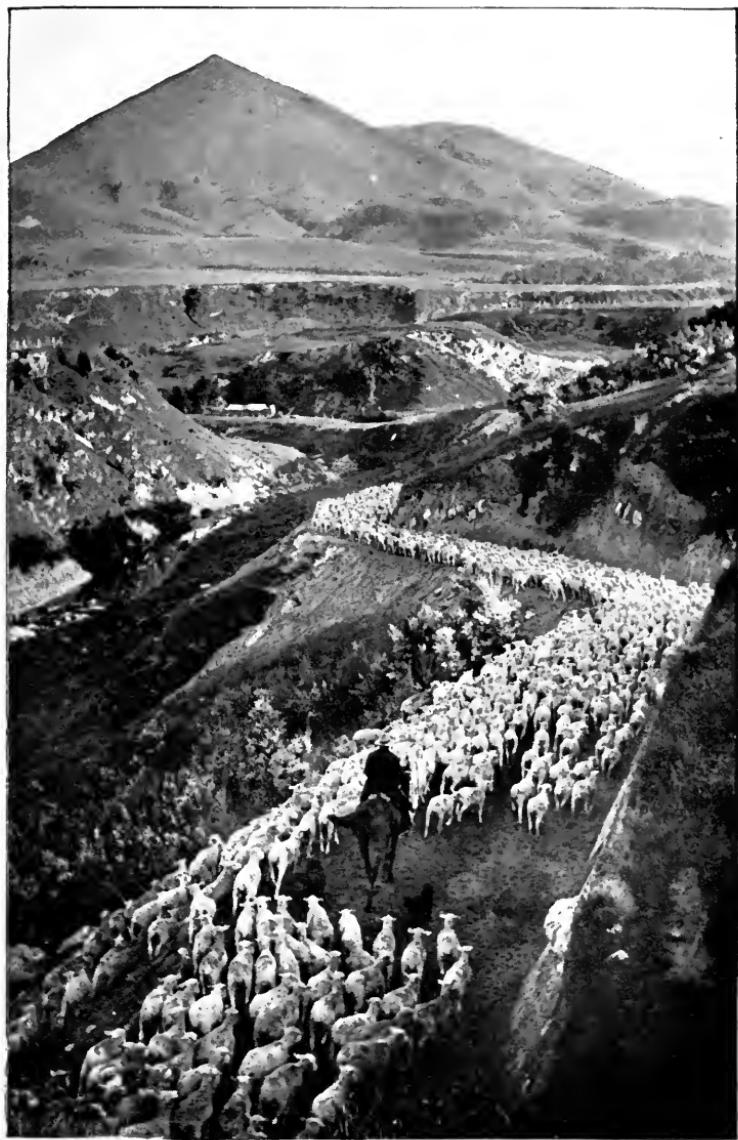


Photo by W. Reid.

SHEEP IN THOUSANDS

If you are wise you will choose a *pension* for your resting-place, and from there take the waters and make excursions to all the wonderful places surrounding this little township.

I had been in New Zealand some four years before I visited Rotorua, and then it was by the merest chance that I got there. I was on my way from Te Aroha—another delightful little health-resort, noted for its healing waters and hot springs—to Auckland, when something went wrong with the train and I was delayed at Hamilton: finding that I had an hour to spare, I made for the hotel, and in the billiard-room found an old friend who had also an hour or so to wait.

It was raining in torrents when our train time arrived, and neither of us felt in the least inclined to leave the comfort of the bar-parlour. My friend was also bound for Auckland, but we both sat on and presently heard our train puffing out of the station; and no sooner had it gone than the sun came out and the rain vanished.

We looked at each other; then my friend seized a time-table and we found that, though there was no other train that day to Auckland, there was an advertisement of Rotorua and a photo of the

Sanatorium grounds with a geyser playing in the background ; this caught my eye.

“ Shall we go there instead ? ” I suggested.

“ It’s miles out of our way,” said my friend.

“ I know two very nice Sydney girls staying there,” I murmured.

“ But I’m due in Auckland to-morrow,” said he.

“ So am I,” I said, “ but there is a telegraph office quite handy.”

“ What are these girls like ? Amusing ? ”

“ Awfully, and they dance beautifully, and one plays.” I could see he was wavering, and presently he pulled a half-crown from his pocket.

“ Heads, we go ; tails, we don’t,” he cried, tossing the coin into the air.

It came down “ tails.” I saw he looked disappointed, but he was a strong-minded man, and was not going to be done by the spin of a coin. He tossed it again, and this time, was more lucky. It came down heads, and a beam of happiness shot across his face. “ Right you are,” he said, “ we’ll go. Have you got any money on you ? ” he added. “ I haven’t.”

By the merest freak of fate I had ten pounds,

so I handed him half, and in two hours' time we were speeding to the Wonderland.

"I am only going to stop one night," he said emphatically, as he stepped out of the train.

I did not argue with him, for I also had an important engagement to keep in Auckland the next day.

Prior to leaving Hamilton I had wired to my friends to Rotorua to book us rooms at their *pension*, and when our buggy drew up I saw them at the window, and with them at least a dozen other men, women, and children. Afterwards I heard, from the one that played, that as we jumped out of the buggy there was an exclamation of surprise from them all, and one girl, expressing the general thought, cried: "Why, neither of them is lame!"

We turned out to be the only two whole males in the establishment; every other man was an invalid, or thought he was, which amounted to the same. The result was that we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, and, needless to say, neither of us left the next morning—we stayed there for about ten days, each day swearing that the next would be our last.

Rotorua is a seductive place, and when you once begin sight-seeing you don't feel inclined to stop till you think you have done it thoroughly. I say *think* advisedly ; for unless you are prepared to spend at least two months in the district, you cannot hope to see one half of the sights and wonders of this curious corner of the world.

From Rotorua there are endless organised excursions of a delightful and, as the guide-books say, "an awe-inspiring nature" ; and, need I add, there is the ubiquitous Cook's man ready to be of service to the tourist. Though I have never "cooked" a trip yet—and I hope I never shall—I would recommend those who can afford such luxuries to do so in this place, as the sights to be seen are all handy and you can enjoy them more safely when going the orthodox route. Afterwards you can, accompanied by a guide, go back and visit those places in which you were most interested.

One of the most pleasant things in travelling is to be lucky enough to come across nice people. Fortune has generally favoured me in this respect, and at Rotorua it did not fail me. The boarding-house at which we stopped was full of nice people,

and, as I said before, being whole and apparently in our right minds, we were, metaphorically speaking, received with open arms. My two Sydney friends had been there a week and knew every one, and (I don't want to seem boastful, but the fact was too obvious even for me not to notice it) every one wanted to know us, and one girl (after being introduced) would not rest until I had declared upon my oath that neither my friend nor I had sciatica, rheumatism or gout, that we were not "on diet," and that we could both walk. A sigh of relief broke from her as I finished, but presently, when she left me, I saw her go to the matron and whisper something in her ear. I put her down straight away as a Doubting Thomas, but I found out afterwards that she had only been asking permission to have a dance that night. She had, I also learnt during our first waltz, been staying there two months with a rheumatic father, and that every man who had been there during that time had had some complaint, and all the while she had been dying for a dance.

I have come to the conclusion that if you are whole and want to be made a fuss of, you should go

to Rotorua in the off-season : it will cure you of any want of self-esteem from which you may be suffering and give you a fillip wherewith to face the struggles of the world when your money has given out and your trip come to an end—Rotorua is more than a health resort. Of the town itself I can say very little, for, beyond driving through it from the station and back again, I saw nothing of it, and for the first three days I think I only wandered about in the Sanatorium grounds. I was in excellent company, and there is enough to keep you busy, if you are keen on sight-seeing, within a stone's-throw of your *pension* or hotel. I really believe if I had had my own way I would have remained in those grounds watching the geysers shooting their great streams of water into the air and causing innumerable rainbows to form, and listening to my companions' interesting, idle chatter, till to-day ; but, being in Rotorua, one must do the sights. They are, as I have already said, remarkable, and if seen as I saw many of them—by moonlight—they assume a virtue they do not possess at any other time.

I either lounged about or played tennis in the daytime, and then, in the cool of the evening, when

other trippers were in their hotels listening to badly played pianos and watching the elderly female element sewing, the four of us would sneak off, hatless, in cool evening dress, to gaze into the bubbling waters of the "Blue Pool." Ah, how weird it is to stare down into this dark, cold, and fairylike hole, and see the bubbles rising and wriggling to the top from some place you cannot see! To look down and let the eye follow the rugged sides, all blue as if lit by some invisible light, and yet to have no idea what strange cause in nature is responsible for it; then to move on to less beautiful but more extraordinary pools where boiling water is rushing up from some hidden spring and gurgling as it reaches the top. The hot air steams up and the moonlight cuts through it and makes it dance like a mist. Around are drooping palms and great fern-trees whose shadows are cast in strange shapes, and the steam half hides them from your view. As we gazed at these weird things my companion began to shiver and held my arm a little tighter. Presently she became nervous, and suggested we should go back.

As we neared the house we saw people sitting on the verandah, and then she began to talk again,

and we sat on a seat that was shaded by a clump of high, waving grass and a punga. Some one in the house was playing the piano, and, as the soft tones floated out to us, the scent of the ground and the calm of the evening soothed her last fears away, and when we went in later on I knew she was no longer afraid.

So it is with all the strange sights of New Zealand: they repel one at first, as the bush does, but when once this first sensation has gone it never returns; its place is filled with a love and longing for them.

The baths at Rotorua, as every one knows, or should know, are famous for their healing properties, and, in the words of the guide-book, "they are divided into five classes—Sulphurous, Alkaline, Acidic, Saline, and Alkaline-silicious"; but, as I shouldn't know one from the other except the sulphurous one, I will say nothing about them, beyond testifying that I have seen many people from various parts of the world soaking in them and looking very much like boiled lobsters. Personally, I thoroughly enjoyed a swim in one or two of the baths—not in the very hot ones. The temperature varies from 60° to 212°, and in the last-named



WAIMANGU GEYSER

the bathers look like bits of underdone beef; they lie flat on their backs with their heads resting just above the water, and they assure you, if you ask them, that they are enjoying themselves immensely and are feeling much benefited. Each bath has a different name, but the only ones I can recollect are the Blue Bath and the Postman's Bath. The latter I remember well, for it was outside that building on a bright moonlight night that I had my first lesson in the "Washington Post." It is a strange place in which to learn dancing, but we four were on our usual after-dinner ramble, and the "Washington Post" was just becoming fashionable. My friend had got it into his head, and, instead of talking, he did nothing but whistle it. So we set to work and danced it, and he was soon cured and out of breath, as the rough slabs outside that bath-house are not conducive to easy movements.

Ten miles out from Rotorua is Wairoa—the little township that was half buried by the Tarawera eruption in 1886, when the pink and white terraces were also destroyed; these, however, are re-forming, though they will probably take a century or so before they are anything like they were prior to Tarawera's eccentricity. The Maori explanation

of this disastrous event in New Zealand history is perhaps worth relating and may explain why it all happened—I said may.

At the foot of Tarawera (which, being interpreted, means a hot hole) there were a couple of small native villages, or pahs as they are called, and Wairoa was one of them. From this last-named place a Tohunga (native priest) named Tohoto went to visit some friends nearer the foot of the mountain; whilst he was there the child of a resident chief became ill from no apparent cause and, on the day Tohoto left, died. The priests were called in and questioned, but they could find no cause for its death, and so suspicion fell upon Tohoto. Tohoto had cursed it, so rumour said (even in Maoriland reports soon get about); therefore it was not long before Tohoto heard these base allegations, and in his anger he called on his gods to exterminate the whole tribe who had thus libelled him.

Now Tohoto was a good priest and his faith was great, and Rua-au-Moko, the god of volcanoes, heard him and duly answered his prayer; but in his eagerness he rather overdid it, for the eruption not only wiped out all Tohoto's enemies but a

good many of his friends at Wairoa, and, like Samson when overthrowing his enemies, Tohoto himself was crushed—he was found buried in the débris shot from the crater of Tarawera. That is the legend, which explains why there are no pink and white terraces now.

The Maori has explanations for everything and legends galore, but one of the prettiest and most romantic is about Lake Rotorua and Hinemoa, the beautiful Maori maid. Of her they are never tired of telling, and no two will repeat the story quite in the same way. Here it is, as I heard it:

Hinemoa was a tall and beautiful young girl and the daughter of Umukaria, chief of a tribe of the Arawas who lived on the banks of Lake Rotorua. For years her beauty had attracted suitors from all parts of New Zealand, but she was wayward and hard to please, and none of the warriors who had wooed her had touched her maiden heart. She was of an age to marry, and her high birth allowed her certain privileges, though it laid on her certain restrictions. Her father, anxious that she should find a suitable husband, did all in his power to invite men of her rank to meet her, and, so

tradition says, gave her every opportunity and encouragement.

In the middle of Lake Rotorua is the island of Mokio, on which another tribe of Maoris lived, who were in the habit of trading with the natives on the mainland and attending their festivals. One day when the warriors from Mokio were at Hinemoa's pah endeavouring to attract her attention by their perfect dancing, her eyes fell upon Tutané, the youngest son of Mokio's chief. His fine limbs and agile movements far surpassed anything she had ever seen. But Tutané was shy, and, knowing he was a younger son, he dared not let the secret of his love for the beautiful Hinemoa be known. Hinemoa, however, recognised all this and silently returned his love. As time went on her passion grew, and every one noticed that her dark eyes were drooping, and they wondered why she sat for hours by the edge of the lake at eventide. They did not know it was to listen to Tutané, who played on the island in the lake, and whose music was wafted over its still waters.

At last the secret came out, and the word went round that Hinemoa was in love with Tutané, the player of Mokio. On hearing this her father grew

angry and forbade her to listen to his playing, but when she still persisted he became afraid that she would take her canoe and cross the lake to her lover. So he ordered every boat to be dragged far up on the beach at night so that Hinemoa could not escape, and he also invited many seductive warriors to his pah, still hoping to cure his daughter; but one and all failed to please her, and daily she languished.

One evening, when the moon was resting behind a cloud, she stole down to the shore and sat sighing for Tutané. She cried to the dark waters of the lake to bring her her lover, but it rippled on unconsciously and only bore to her the sound of Tutané's playing, and she grew sad and cried out again, in wailing tones: "Tutané! Tutané! come to me!" But no voice answered her.

Then a sudden resolve seized her; she would go to him. She looked round her and saw she was alone, and a great joy filled her heart. Silently she threw off the mat that covered her beautiful limbs and placed it by the side of a *toi* bush.

She was lovely, and she knew it, and, as the dim light showed her reflection in the water, she held out her arms. Her loose hair was hanging

over her shoulders, and her bright, lustrous eyes had a new light in them. She gazed across at the island, and with one last cry : "Tutané, I come!" she sprang from the shore far into the lake.

Bravely she struggled through the cold, dark waters whilst she heard the tones of her lover's music ; but the distance was great, the darkness now hid the little island, and she knew not where she was. "Tutané! Tutané!" she cried as her strength began to fail her ; her voice was dim and no one heard. The music had ceased now, and a great fear came over her ; but she was high-born and brave, and though the darkness of the great lake filled her with awe, she braced herself up and struggled forward, the thought of her youthful lover urging her on. Suddenly the music began again and Hinemoa's heart leapt for joy, for she knew she was swimming straight, and at last, faint and weary, just as her arms were refusing to help her, her feet touched the pebbly bottom of the shore. She had reached her destination.

For a moment or two she rested and listened to the music ; it was quite near now, and she was no longer afraid. As soon as she had regained

her breath she stepped out of the water, and there, right before her, lay a beautiful crystal pool all bubbling with heat. Hinemoa ran to it and bathed herself in it. Its warmth revived her, and presently she slipped right into its embrace, her shivering stopped and she became filled with new life; like a child she played in the pool, throwing the water into the air. Suddenly she began to wonder how she was to find her lover now she was in Mokio, for his playing had stopped again, and she knew that if by accident she entered the wharé of any other warrior he could claim her as his wife. As she thought of this her fear came back; she called on her gods to show her what to do, and, as if in answer to her prayer, she heard a man coming towards her. She hid herself under the water behind a jutting rock and waited. It was a slave, Tutané's slave, carrying a calabash, and as she watched him he went to the lake and filled it.

Hinemoa cried out to him in a gruff voice: "Come here and bring me water to drink."

The slave came to her at once, and she took a sip from the calabash and then broke it on the ground, at which the slave became very angry

saying his master was thirsty through his playing, and had sent him for water.

“Then go fetch another calabash,” said Hinemoa, and the slave obeyed, having told Tutané that a man by the pool had broken the old one. When the slave returned Hinemoa again called him and again broke the calabash, and this time the slave was more angry, and went back to his master with the news.

“Fetch me my club!” cried Tutané, “and let me find this man who dares to insult me.”

Hinemoa heard him coming, and now that he was so near she became timid, and feared to move from behind the rock, and Tutané sought high and low, but could find no one. But he saw the broken calabash, and his determination to avenge the insult made him search more carefully, and at last, as his hand went around the rock it touched Hinemoa’s.

“Who are you?” he cried, savagely dragging her from behind the rock.

“I, Hinemoa, who loves you,” she answered, and stepped from the pool, and stood before him in all her beauty.

Tutané could hardly realise the truth, but his

love was great, and he removed his own mat from his shoulders, wrapped her in it, and bore her off to his hut.

In the morning her marriage was proclaimed abroad, and the little pool of water by the side of the lovely lake is to this day called Hinemoa's bath, in memory of her great love for Tutané.

CHAPTER VI

The world's safety-valve—An evil prophet—Some strange and unearthly sights—A word or two concerning natives—A Maori pah, and some Maori children.

ROTORUA itself is a peaceful place, and only the two geysers give one the faintest idea that Nature, hereabouts, is letting herself loose. The very fact that even these geysers are managed by the hand of man and made to play in a special place shows that control holds sway here ; but when you arrive at Whakarewarewa, a few miles away, you might quite reasonably suppose that hell had got loose and that all the fiends were out holiday-making. It is one of the liveliest spots in creation, and in all probability your first visit there will be a short one ; two hours of it will be as much as you can stand. It is a nerve-splitting, weird, and awful place, but its very weirdness will appeal to you.

I felt, as I looked down into the boiling, seething crater of one of its pools, that here I had found

something human. It struck me that at last I had discovered the world's safety-valve ; that the green fields, the lovely valleys, and glorious calm of the world were all in connection with this spot ; that here was the other side of the earth's smile—the little hour when the preacher swears and smashes things in order that he may let off steam. Here Nature was letting off its steam.

There is a rugged river that runs through Whakarewarewa, with huge rocks scattered about in wild and grotesque disorder, and the water rushes over them with a fierce delight and bangs against the rock-girt sides, while now and then it takes a bend where its force seems to have driven the rocks back. In one rock a hole is cleft, and from it great gusts of steam belch forth and hot water hisses into the river. It is as fierce as a raging lion, and about as mad and uncontrolled.

There is a terrible noise, and strange things make up this clamour. Not far from the river, or creek, torrents of boiling water are being shot hundreds of feet into the air, and near by is a pool of boiling mud that seems to be worrying and struggling in an attempt to break its bounds and cover the earth with its filth.

“Tread gently here,” Sophia, the guide, will tell you, shouting to make herself heard. “The ground is dangerous.”

You feel the earth giving, and you glance down, to see that you’re standing on a sort of crust which any day, or any moment, may be lifted by a geyser or some other form of Nature’s temper.

To say that Whakarewarewa is grand and “awe-inspiring” is to use a feeble phrase; its very horror makes it magnificent.

But to see all these things, and feel them, you must not be one of a chattering crowd. You must not hurry from one place to another and be disturbed by the talk of an ignorant showman, or surrounded by a mob of Maori children thirsting for your pennies. You must go there with some one you know well, or, better still, with only a native guide; then you will appreciate it.

There are plenty of good guides, but Sophia is the most famous, and in her there are all the traditions of her race. She is as fine a specimen of the old-class Maori woman as is to be found in New Zealand, and she is a woman that even the praise and gold of tourists have not spoilt. Her English is also worth hearing, as she speaks it

well, with a soft, liquid accent that is most fascinating. Apart from her experiences as a guide, she can tell you endless legends, and many good stories of her own adventures, and when I last saw her she was playing her own part, as guide, on the stage, in a piece called *The Land of the Moa*. That alone is unique, for very few people, if any, have had such an experience. Maggie is another well-known guide, and I believe it is she who speaks English better than any other Maori; she also is a fine specimen of the pure-blooded native.

At Whakarewarewa there is a very good though small hotel, the proprietor of which owns a remarkably fine Maori carved house which he purchased and brought to this village. It is called Wharé Whakaiero, and is one of the first things you notice on arrival in this queer place. There is an interesting story attached to Wharé Whakaiero which gives an idea of Maori superstition, and also shows how strangely this superstition sometimes works out. Originally this house (Wharé, as it is termed in Maori) was built to the order of an Arawa chief who wished for it as a memento to show his respect for his wife. Unfortunately, whilst the carvers were at work, he entered the wharé

smoking his pipe. This, according to the belief of the tohungas (priests), is a sacrilegious act. Their idea is that a house is sacred, or tapu, until the last bit of timber has been laid and the last piece of carving finished. When all this is done a ceremony takes place which removes the tapu. So that when the tohunga heard of the chief's disregard for the tapu, he went to him and warned him that calamity would fall upon him for his act unless he at once stopped the building. But the chief only smiled at him and ordered the carvers to go on with their work. The tohunga became filled with righteous anger and alarm, and said that seven people should die if the work were not stopped at once.

The carvers went on with their work, and a few days later the chief's wife died. He loved her dearly, and was so cut up that he hearkened to the voice of the tohunga and had the work stopped but as soon as his grief had worn off, and he had taken a new wife, he set the men to work again ; and, strange to say, directly they began his second wife died. Again he stopped them and again he married, and for some years the whare stood desolate and unfinished ; but when

his sons were growing up he decided to have the building finished for them. And this time calamity fell heavily upon him, for not only did his third wife die, but immediately afterwards she was followed to the gates of Paradise by his two sons.

After this the chief was sorely stricken, and no longer defied the priests, but abandoned the wharé altogether, and it became like other alleged haunted houses—a place to be avoided. Years afterwards Mr. Nelson, the proprietor of the hotel mentioned, bought it and placed it where it now stands. He too was warned that two deaths had yet to occur before the place would be free from the stain. This warning, so it is said, was also disregarded, and the opening ceremony was conducted in the usual native fashion; but within a week the head priest who officiated at it died, and the one who assisted him, and went to his funeral, died almost immediately afterwards.

Now any one can enter the Wharé Whakaiero in perfect safety, for the evil influence has gone, and the stain of Te Waru's smoke has been wiped out by the seven Maoris' deaths.

The biggest and most powerful geyser at

Whakarewarewa is Pohutu, which throws a column of boiling water about sixty feet into the air, and alongside it is a thing called "The Cauldron" which bubbles up and overflows just before Pohutu shoots, whilst Pohutu itself plays just when the "Prince of Wales's Feathers," another geyser, reaches a certain height, somewhere about twenty feet. There is another big geyser, whose playing is not sure, but when it does perform it is a most magnificent sight, as it throws a tremendous column of water quite a hundred feet high. Sometimes, if it has not been working and there is no one about, a bar of soap dropped into its crater will start it; but this is a forbidden practice, and I ought not to mention it, as a little too much soap might make it very angry—and then good-bye Whakarewarewa !

There are many other weird sights spread about this lively place. There is the hissing waterspout, the Pigeon, a small geyser that does an immense amount of work; but one of the most curious things is the Torpedo, which makes a noise like a torpedo blowing up a ship. The explosion occurs at fairly regular intervals, and is caused by the boiling mud from one of the holes coming into contact with a

cold-water stream. The Brain-pot is a horrid-looking thing, very like a gigantic bird's nest, filled with a kind of boiling porridge, and it was named the Brain-pot because it was once used to boil the brains of a chief, Tetakutuku, who offended his brethren and for some years hid himself away in a cave near there. On capturing him they killed him, cooked his brains in this natural (or unnatural) pot, and ate them.

For miles around there are geysers and other extraordinary sights, but as I have not been to them all, I shall not attempt to describe them, but return to Rotorua and visit Ohinemuta, the Maori pah just outside it. This pah, though so close to an important tourists' centre, is still, or was a few years ago, a very fair specimen of a Maori village, and though, after seeing it, I visited and even stayed at several pahs right in the back blocks, I noticed very little difference. Here at Ohinemuta there is a very fine meeting-house with beautifully carved posts, and well-plaited flax matting inside surrounding the walls. These houses are the Maori town-halls, and in them the natives gather for friendly intercourse and for sleep, but whether or no the Ohinemuta one is used for this purpose

I cannot say. Anyhow, it is a fair sample of what the Maoris, since their beginning, have used for these purposes. Scattered round the meeting-house are several huts where the Maoris can be seen in their native state. Most of the inhabitants of this pah live on the tourists, either by selling curiosities, or by acting as guides, whilst some hire out their canoes, or work as labourers on the steamers. Among them are several whites who have taken up their abode there and in some cases have married Maori women.

The Maoris here must not, however, be taken as a sample of this splendid race, for, good as they are, they cannot help being spoiled a little, in such a place, by Europeans.

The real Maori lives far off the beaten track, whilst in the towns you will find the educated Maori, who again is a perfectly different person. To me there are three distinct classes : the country Maori, who is now all we have left to give us an idea of what the race was ; the loafing Maori, who hangs around the towns and townships, and spends his life eating, drinking, and gambling ; and the educated Maori, who has proved himself equal to most of the whites in competitive examinations, who as a speaker



A MAORI WHARÉ, OHINEMUTA

is not only wonderfully fluent but surpasses many of the speakers in our own Parliament, and could walk round a large percentage, if logic were a necessary attribute to parliamentary debate. Others, who have become lawyers, have proved themselves quite as capable as their white brethren when argument has been called for, and those who have taken Orders preach sermons which will not allow one a chance of sleeping.

Speech-making and recitation were always among the most important items in Maori education in the wild days. It was as necessary to be able to speak as to dance, and a man who was not accomplished in these arts might just as well have remained where he was, and not bothered his mother to bring him up. When it is known that every legend—their name is legion, and their length enormous—had to be handed down by word of mouth, the feats of memory which these uncivilised savages had to accomplish would make the ordinary 'Varsity scholar's hair turn grey in a night. But not only had these students to commit to memory all the Maori traditions connected with their tribe : they also had to remember the genealogical tree of every important man in that tribe.

I remember once, at a tangi (feast) given after the death of a chief, seeing a young man get up on the platform in front of the meeting-house at nine o'clock in the morning and recite the dead man's deeds, his father's and his grandfather's deeds, and he never stopped talking till one o'clock, and then looked none the worse for it.

There is a touch of the Irishman in these Maoris, only they seem to prefer to talk of the greatness of things rather than of the injustice thereof, and so as a race they are more popular. One pities the Irish, but one would never dream of pitying the Maori—he is too grand and big. At Ohinemuta you will see dozens of little Maori children who run about dancing with delight when they see a party of English folk. These little beggars have not much to thank us for, yet they do love the white man, and, like their parents, they forget that we have stolen their country, and only remember the good things we have taught them and the good times they have now compared with the very uncertain existence they possessed before we came. I think there are more children in Whakarewarewa than any other place to which I have been, and they all seem the same age. They run about in

groups, and will dance a caricature of the Huka for you for twopence, or dive into the warm mud-pools for halfpennies with the greatest of glee, and when there is no business doing they just squat in an oil bath and jabber away to each other, boys and girls, all as naked as they were born, but oh, so merry. Their little black skins (they look almost black when wet, with the sun on them) shine, and their bright eyes dance, and their laughing faces are good to look upon. Irresponsible little urchins, who really are not half as keen on the pennies as they are on enjoying themselves and seeing you do the same. The Maoris have no sorrows ; they live for to-day and let to-morrow go hang—which is a wise policy, I honestly believe. Anyhow, it saves one a world of worry.

CHAPTER VII

I make a fresh start—I meet a fresh man ; we arrive in Napier, see its sights and disfigure its walls—Some side-lights, and my second and more successful attempt at tramping.

HAVING once broken away from the routine of work, by which I mean the plodding side—the nine-to-five-with-an-hour-for-lunch sort of thing—I settled down to enjoy life and take it as it came. At first I used to worry myself terribly to find excuses for certain dilatory actions on my part, for early in my career I had an idea it was quite wrong to enjoy myself, and that if I was really happy for a whole day I ought not to have been ; and the next day I would look out for some calamity which I believed would surely fall upon me. After a few years of this I suppose my conscience became hardened, for I took a reverse view of things and thought myself very badly treated if I suffered from any misfortune. I never minded what ordinary people consider misfortune—a lack of money and

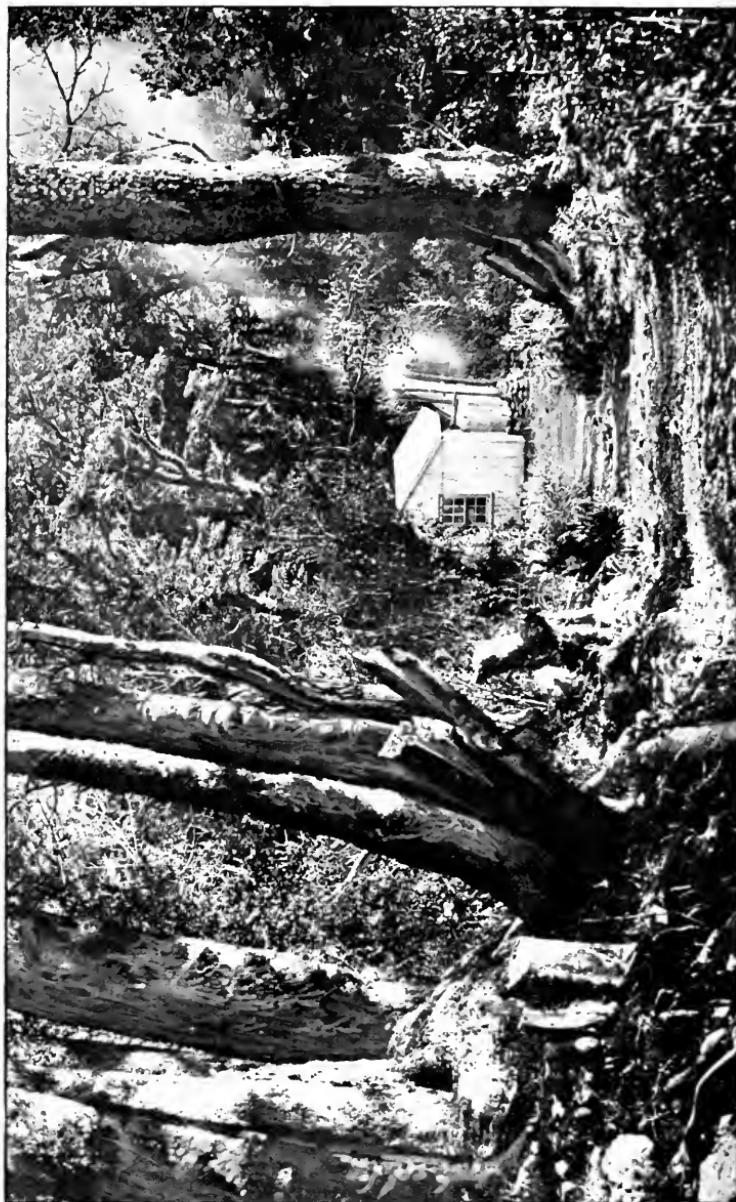
no prospect of a bed, for there was a spice in that sort of luck that I enjoyed. As an old actor (Tom Ford, who was a well-known character both in New Zealand and Australia) once remarked, after his days of success were over, "I hate the monotony of knowing where my next meal is coming from or where I'm going to sleep"; and, strange as this may sound to any one who has always been sure of the next meal, it is very wonderful what a fascination this species of existence has, and how easily one falls into the way of taking life as it comes and not worrying over its little details. I never went hungry myself except once when I lost myself in the bush; and I was never without a bed when in a town, though in the country the stars have often been my canopy and the sweet earth my couch; but, then, that was either because I was too lazy to find an inn or a station at which to sleep, or preferred to slumber in the open air.

There is nothing as nice as sleeping out on a fine night. The beautiful freshness of the morning seems to enter into your soul, and the expanse of things, on first awaking, makes you feel bigger and greater than when your view amounts to four grotesquely papered walls and a ceiling that droops,

as most country ceilings do. When sleeping out you wake with the chirruping of the birds, and the first chirrup sounds faintly on your half-conscious senses, and you listen in a drowsy way, only half aware of the twittering around you, till the whole bush is alive with song and the old sun is coming up like a ball of fire ; then you gradually rouse up, and life seems to pour into you, and you stretch yourself and look around. There is nothing to cramp your view ; everything is big and bright, and "that tired feeling," so often alluded to in *The Daily Mail*, has no meaning for you.

It is here, in the crowded cities, that life sometimes weighs on one like a burden, and that one feels suffocated and flat. It's the crowd and noise—not the hard times or the work—just the want of space and the continual uproar and movement, that tear one to pieces. It does not matter how far you get into the country in England, the noise of the Strand and the hum of the 'buses seem to reach you ; but out in the bush there is silence—a grand silence that you can almost hear.

Heigh-ho ! I have wandered away from my subject this time : it was the bush that did it, and it's done worse things than that, for I've known it call men



THE PEACE OF THE BUSH

who have once tasted its charms from their wives and families, and businesses and debts, right back to it, thousand of miles. It has such a terrible way of gripping you, and it seems to pull at you just when you are weakest, and drag and call till you answer. You can fight and fight against it, but it will win at last, and you know it.

To get back to the charm of the Great Uncertainty, when I left Rotorua I had not only spent all I had, but I had reversed the tables and borrowed from my friend, who, luckily for me, had had a supply of cash sent him from town, and so when I got back to Auckland I had to face the world.

I thought of my insurance, but I was tired of that ; then the gum-fields, but I still fought shy of them ; and finally I remembered an old ambition of mine to be a cow-boy, whereupon I borrowed another sovereign from my friend, and with it bought a ticket to Napier, where I knew the chief cattle- and sheep-stations were situated.

Before leaving Auckland I spent my few last shillings (which was by now quite a religious rite of my own invention), and stepped on to the boat to all intents and purposes a pauper, but quite happy. I have often heard people pitying some

other person because he had lost all his money and literally had to face the world and start again without a penny. Poor things ! Why, it is the most interesting experience one can have. I have started life a dozen times at least, and I know heaps of others who make a hobby of it. It is like going for a ramble in a new country without having the faintest idea what you are going to see, only knowing that everything will be new to you. It's Nansenising. Change is the best pick-me-up in the world, and the man who goes the same walk every day at the same time, and sees the same people, is, in my opinion, on his death-bed ; the life that was in him must be oozing out of him from sheer lack of stimulant, for when interest ceases death begins. And I am sure you can't die as long as you keep on moving. I have seen people beginning to die years before they actually did ; first they drop this little interest, then that, and so on, till all their interests are gone, and then, heigh-ho ! it is time they went, for the world has no more use for them. It is all their own fault, but they don't think so. The world really is a merry little place, and the more you see of it, the better you get to like it. It is only sad to those

who are sad, whilst it can buck up and be as jolly as you like if you wish it to. The world treats us as we treat it, and so do the people in it ; it's a many-sided place, and you can generally find exactly what you look for. The pessimist sees calamity, the humourist humour, and the optimist—well, he gets the best of it all round, for not only the world and the people, but even the animals and birds treat him well.

On board ship one is always tempted to moralise. I think it is leaving old friends that does it, but I had hardly been two hours on board before I found a new one who was both interesting and useful.

“ Been to India ? ” asked a man at my elbow.

“ No,” I answered. “ Why ? ”

“ Those shoes,” he said, glancing down at a pair of white tennis shoes I was wearing.

“ Do Anglo-Indians consider they have the monopoly of them ? ” I asked. Certainly I had got them from a friend who had just returned from India, but I wasn’t going to tell him so.

“ No,” he said, but he looked disappointed. However, he cheered up after a bit and we discussed the scenery and England. The last-named place is an exceedingly popular topic, because

directly you leave it you begin to think a million times more of it than when you lived in it.

The journey to Napier takes a couple of days, and by the time it was over my Anglo-Indian friend and I were on the best of terms. He confided to me that he was the Advance Agent for a Concert Company which was due to appear in Napier a week after he landed there. His work was to see that the posters were well displayed and that the company was properly advertised. He was fairly new at the game, as he had only been taken on in Sydney, but his successful work in Auckland had put him on his feet. At one time he had been in the Army, as I could see by the cut of his jib, and he told me he had left owing to his inability to live on his salary. Since then he had been taking any work he could get. We passed away the evening on deck swapping yarns, or, in other words, exchanging experiences, and before the boat stopped at Napier I had engaged myself as his bill-poster.

I had never stuck up a bill in my life (a theatrical bill, I mean), but I wanted a job, and he assured me he could tell me how it was done, as he had superintended it in Auckland. So he fell in with

my suggestion and then asked me to lend him half a crown to pay our cab fare from the wharf to Napier, explaining that he had spent all his before leaving and could get no more till next week. As I had nothing I was unable to assist him, but he was a man of resource and decided that if we wanted a proper reception at a decent hotel and had not the wherewithal to pay for it, the next best thing was to appear as if we had. Therefore a cab was a necessity, and as we had no money to pay for it, then the proprietor of the hotel must be made to see that it was his duty. This last task my friend took upon himself, and we hailed a cab.

The port of Napier is a little place called the Spit, and it is just about as big as its name implies. Three important towns in New Zealand have ports some way from them—Lyttelton being the port of Christchurch, and Port Chalmers of Dunedin. The drive from the Spit to Napier is not an interesting one, but Napier itself is a delightful little town, consisting of one main street of big shops, hotels, etc., which runs parallel to the Parade. Along the Parade there are some very fine residences overlooking the sea, and there is a good sea-wall with

an asphalt walk for something over a mile. The wall, I believe, was built and is kept in order by convicts. Between Napier and the Spit, at the end of the promenade, there are some high cliffs which, when I was there last, took to breaking away, and subsequently, I believe, destroyed a large portion of a light railway that was being constructed to join Napier and the Spit. The landslip came at an awkward time, when labourers were scarce, and it was hinted abroad that prisoners were to be requisitioned. When such an order is issued and the police are after able-bodied men, it is best to look to your morals, for on the slightest provocation you find yourself run in. At these times, it is said, the sentences are severe, and the magistrates are particularly down on petty offences. At other times a policeman would as lief pay your cab home for you as run you in, if you could not walk home. But don't let this keep any of my readers from going to Napier; they don't have landslips often, and the town is so pretty, and the air is so bracing, and the streets are named after famous fighters, and there is a park where the band plays, and I think tea is served there now, but if it isn't it ought to be. There is a tea-shop at Rotorua, I hear,

though I sought everywhere for one in vain when I was there. Altogether Napier is a sociable, jolly little place, and I have the most pleasant recollections of it.

A funny thing occurred to me only a year ago that shows how careful one should be, and how tiny this world of ours is. I was in London and particularly anxious to see a certain gentleman of high degree ; in fact, I wanted an interview with him, and when I arrived at his hotel I found that there were at least ten other Press men equally anxious to see him. The porter to whom I gave my card smiled.

“ He won’t see anybody yet,” he answered.

“ Never mind that ; you take my card up,” said I.

The man did, and, what was more, came down five minutes afterwards and told me to follow him.

I don’t know who was the most surprised : the porter, the ten waiting reporters, or myself, but the secret lay in the fact that the great man’s secretary, though I did not know it, had been introduced to me in Napier and still remembered my name, and out of curiosity had sent for me to come up, on seeing my card. I was the only man

that day who got his interview, for I kept my great man talking till I was positive those ten reporters were tired of waiting.

Napier is the centre of a large district of wealthy squatters, and has a freezing works and several other large and prosperous businesses which keep things brisk there. Also the station hands come in to spend their cheques in Napier, which helps it along. These men take a year to make their cheques, but only about five days to "knock them down"; the term is a colloquial one, but very expressive, and awfully true.

When my friend and I arrived at the hotel we were received with great style. His airy, fascinating manner, genial smile, and excellent wardrobe made our task easy, and before he had even asked for the cab to be paid the proprietor, after scratching the back of his ear, paid it with a "That's all right, sir." We were shown two delightful rooms, mine host looking as if he could not do enough for us.

We had not been an hour in the place before my friend came up to me and drew me aside. "You are my assistant, not my bill-sticker," he said, and immediately afterwards introduced me to

two or three men with whom he had been talking. One of them called for drinks, and another offered me his cigar-case, and I was dragged into the conversation bodily. I was never so greedily attacked in my life, and I could not help wondering what the meaning of it was. I tried all manner of dodges to solve the riddle, but failed. All I could see was that I had become the centre of attraction, and, my friend, who had been affable before, had now become familiar, his manner being completely changed. He patted me on the back in a most friendly manner, spoke of me as if I were his dearest friend, and endowed me with virtues I have never possessed ; he even talked about my People—I spell it with a capital P because it sounded as if it wanted one when he said it. Well, I had a very jolly evening ; our friends sat at our table, and wine flowed, and though I felt beastly awkward at receiving so many good things and not being able to offer any in return, my friend made up for it.

“ You are my guest,” he cried joyfully, looking at me, “ and not a drop shall you stand to-night. This is my treat,” he added.

I was astounded, for I had not even hinted at calling for drinks or, as it is called there, shouting—

but my breath completely failed me when he rang the bell and ordered both drinks and cigars for every one in the room ; however, I said nothing. I drank my wine and smoked my cigars, and I now reckon my first night in Napier as one of the most jovial ones I spent there.

As I was creeping up to bed I was smacked on the back by my friend.

“ Well, old chap, we did that fine, didn’t we ? ” he said.

“ Ripping,” I replied, “ but what was the meaning of it all ? ”

“ Why, you silly ass, I just dropped the proprietor a hint that you had blue blood in your veins—and he did the rest. Every one thinks you are a lord in disguise.”

At first I felt very much annoyed, but when I began my tirade my friend smiled placidly, and, as I was tired, I did not argue.

“ Well, you see, something had to be done,” he explained ; “ I can’t boom my theatrical company without money, and I shan’t get a cent till next week, so I had to do it.”

“ But I don’t see——”

“ Why, you fool, I borrowed a fiver from mine

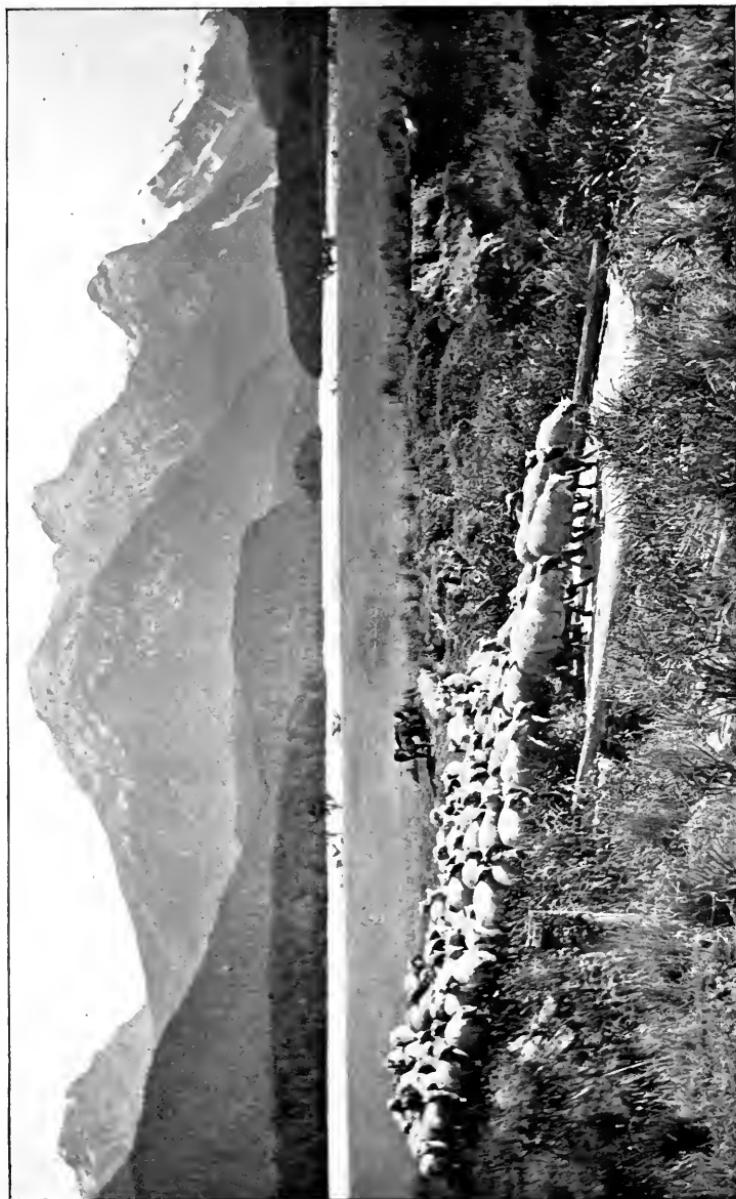


Photo by H. Reid

ON A SHEEP STATION



host ; now do you see ? And think of the time we'll have all the week, and what a lift it gives the company having an alleged lord as assistant advance agent. Of course, they think you are only doing it for fun, and that you are rolling in money. There's two pounds to help you to live up to it. Good-night, old chap," he added, and went off laughing.

The next morning we began our pasting, and between us we not only did the work well, but we thoroughly enjoyed it. During the week we saw all there was to see in and around Napier ; we rode and drove, and in the evening were well treated by everybody. But the funniest thing of all was that though both my friend and I assured the hotel proprietor that he had been having his leg pulled concerning my blue blood, nothing would induce the old chap to believe it, nor would those three good fellows who had made merry with us believe it, and it was not till about the third day that I managed to persuade them of their mistake, and then it was through coming across a mutual friend of ours from England. But by this time we were all such good friends that it made no difference, and when we left, having squared up our debts, we had a splendid send off.

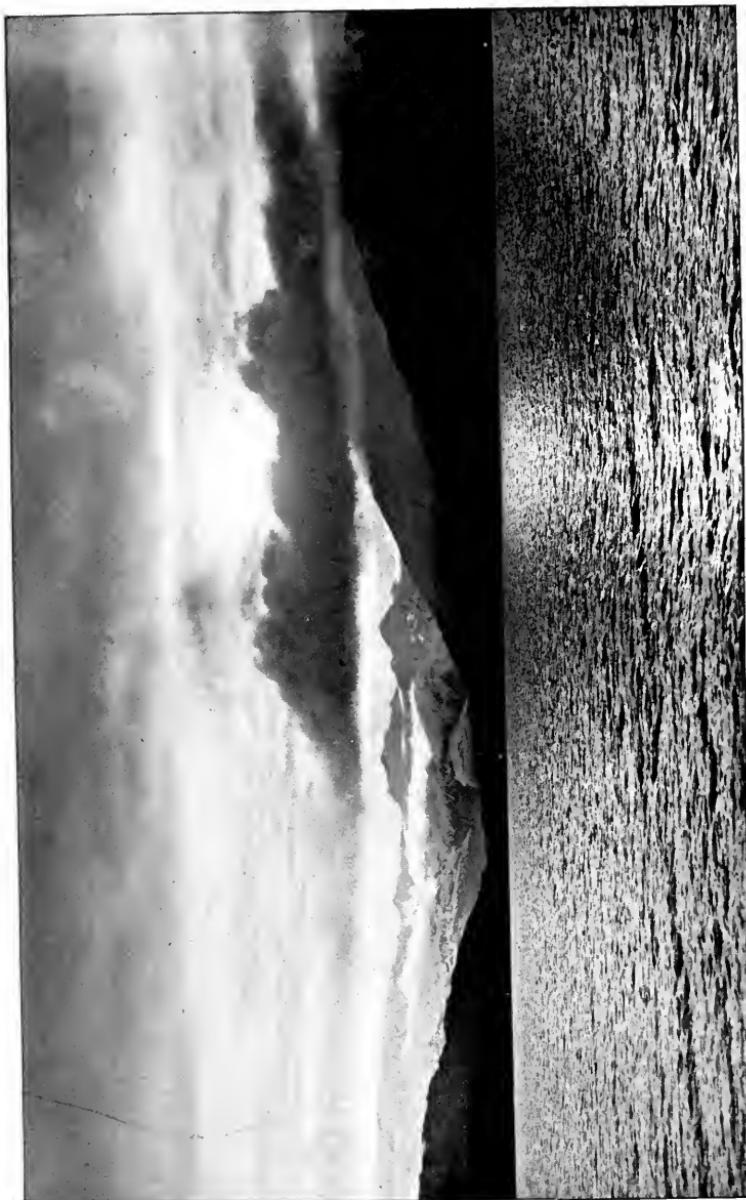
At Hastings, the next township, which is a suburb of Napier and noted for its shows, we worked well, and, having drawn my salary at the end of the second week, we parted, he to go on with his advance agent's work, and I to tramp up country to find work on a cattle station.

From that day to this we have never met, but I often think of that old man who scratched the hair at the back of his ear and wanted to call me "m' lord."

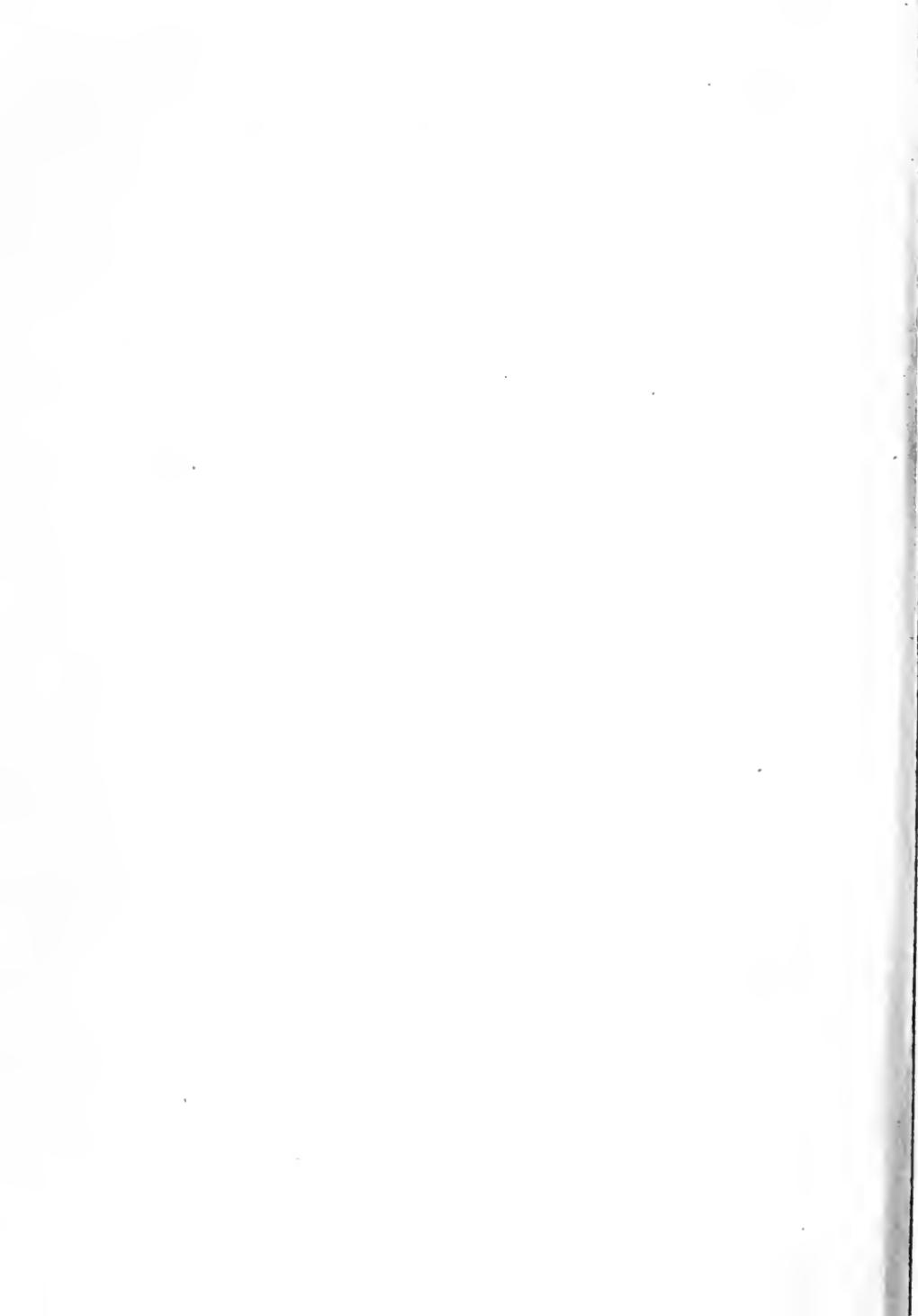
I have had many ups and downs in my short life, but the next five weeks' tramp was about the most peculiar.

Having learnt the methods of a swagman, I started off from my small hotel and tried to look as unconcerned as I could—I had my workman's clothes on and my swag on my back, and I tried to think that people were not looking at me. Well, I suppose they weren't, but it was just as bad as if they were: I felt self-conscious. For the first half-hour I walked at a furious pace, and Hastings was far out of sight before I pulled up to draw breath.

"Well, I guessed you were going right through," I heard a voice cry, and, on turning round, I saw



LAKE WANAKA



a man lying full length on the ground smoking a short clay pipe with evident pleasure. His head was resting on a rolled-up blanket.

“Are you a swagman, too?” I asked, pulling my pipe out of my pocket.

“Looks like it, don’t it?” said he. “But if you call yourself a swagman I don’t. You’re more like a wild express. What were you running for?”

“I was merely walking,” I said.

“Then for the love of heaven, man, don’t ever run. But I say, mate, give us a bit of your baccy before you go; mine’s just about done, and I see you’ve got a fine plug there.”

I pulled my swag off and sat down by the roadside, and presently handed my tobacco to my fellow tramp.

“You’re the right sort, you are,” said he, “but you ain’t been on the road long, have you?”

“About half an hour,” I said.

“Ah, I thought so. Well, you just take a few tips from me. I’ve been on it six years come shearing time.”

“What!” I cried. “Six years looking for work?”

The man was cutting my plug of tobacco in half,

and he stopped and gazed blankly at me, and then went slowly to work again, but he never answered my question, so I repeated it.

“Young man,” said he solemnly, “I’m no common labourer. When you’ve been as long in this country as I have you’ll not ask Happy Jack (that’s me) if I’m looking for work. I scorn it, and I’m proud to say I’ve never sunk to accepting it, and as long as I am I, and New Zealand New Zealand, Happy Jack (as they call me) never will work.”

The man spoke so solemnly that, in spite of my desire to laugh, I had not the courage to do so.

“Work,” he continued, handing me back half my tobacco, “is demoralising. What do you work for? Money? sordid stuff. Food? you can get that for the asking. Clothes? mere vanities. Why, man, work is the root of all evil, and evil is a thing my parents taught me to shun, and shun it I will, s’elp me God,” he added, kissing the half plug of tobacco he held in his hand.

“Well, Jack,” I said, “I admire your sentiments, and I congratulate you on having, in spite of temptations—you look as if you had experienced them—lived up to your parental advice.”

“Ah, yes,” he sighed. “I have been tempted, but not by work.” He began to roll the shavings of tobacco in the palm of his hand. “Shall I tell you,” he asked, “my greatest temptation?”

“Pray don’t!” I cried, in as sympathetic a voice as I could.

“No, brother, it is not a sad story, but I really would like to set fire to some of these surly squatters’ haystacks—that’s my temptation. Do you believe me, only last week one of the brutes refused to give me a night’s lodging unless I chopped firewood for half an hour. Did I do it? No, I didn’t, but I left all his bloomin’ gates open, and the next morning I bet he wished he’d given me a bed.”

“Tell me,” I asked, “how far is it to the next station?”

“About a mile; it’s one of the biggest near here, and they do you well, too; plenty to eat and a nice, comfortable hut to sleep in, and they never asks you to work. But come along; we’ll get up there, as it’s nearing sundown.”

CHAPTER VIII

A tramp's paradise—The ways of Happy Jack and other gentlemen of the road—The ways of the bush—A trying experience—I am lost, but get found.

FOR years I had heard of the elaborate way the working man was catered for in New Zealand, and I had long ago come to the conclusion that it was rightly named "The Working Man's Paradise," but I must confess that I was astonished at the luxurious way the tramps (politely called the Swagmen, or Swaggers) were treated, especially when it was common knowledge that ten out of a dozen of these men would be grossly insulted were they offered work; but it is just those two out of the twelve who really are in search of employment, and the principle of the thing, that still uphold the custom of feeding and giving a night's lodging to any man who asks for it. The cost of providing sleeping accommodation and food for swagmen has been put down by a number of well-known station-

holders in New Zealand, at not less than £100 per annum, and that this is true I have no doubt, as I have myself been on a station where, one night, there have been no less than thirty swagmen to be fed and lodged ; and this, I have been told, is nothing compared with what happens when the Hastings Show or a big race meeting is being held in the vicinity, and the swagmen from all parts of Hawkes Bay and the Wairarapa come hurrying through to see the fun ; or in shearing time, when real workers join the army of loafers and begin their tour in search of employment. Another reason why it is tolerated and has to be continued, in spite of the agitation amongst squatters, is that there is at present no other way for the real workers to find out where employment is wanted, or, on the other hand, for settlers to get men if they need them. So the system continues, and the wicked flourish in order that the good may not suffer, which is not always the case—at least so I am told by our vicar.

But to return to where I left off in the last chapter. My companion, knowing the run of the ropes, said he would lead the way and do the necessary talking, to which proposal I agreed promptly.

We had reached the station, and in front of me I saw a large, low, wood-built bungalow—one of the largest I had ever seen—surrounded by a fine garden: this was the owner's house. To the right of it lay the men's quarters, built on the same lines, but not nearly so elaborately, whilst to the left, a few hundred yards off, were the wool-sheds, stables, and cow-sheds; these were low buildings with corrugated iron roofs. The stock-yards, pig-sties, poultry-houses, etc., were also close at hand. Whilst I was looking round me my companion walked slowly on towards the men's quarters, and presently I saw him knock at a side-door; as I joined him it was opened.

“Got any work for me and my mate, boss?” said Happy Jack, with a smile.

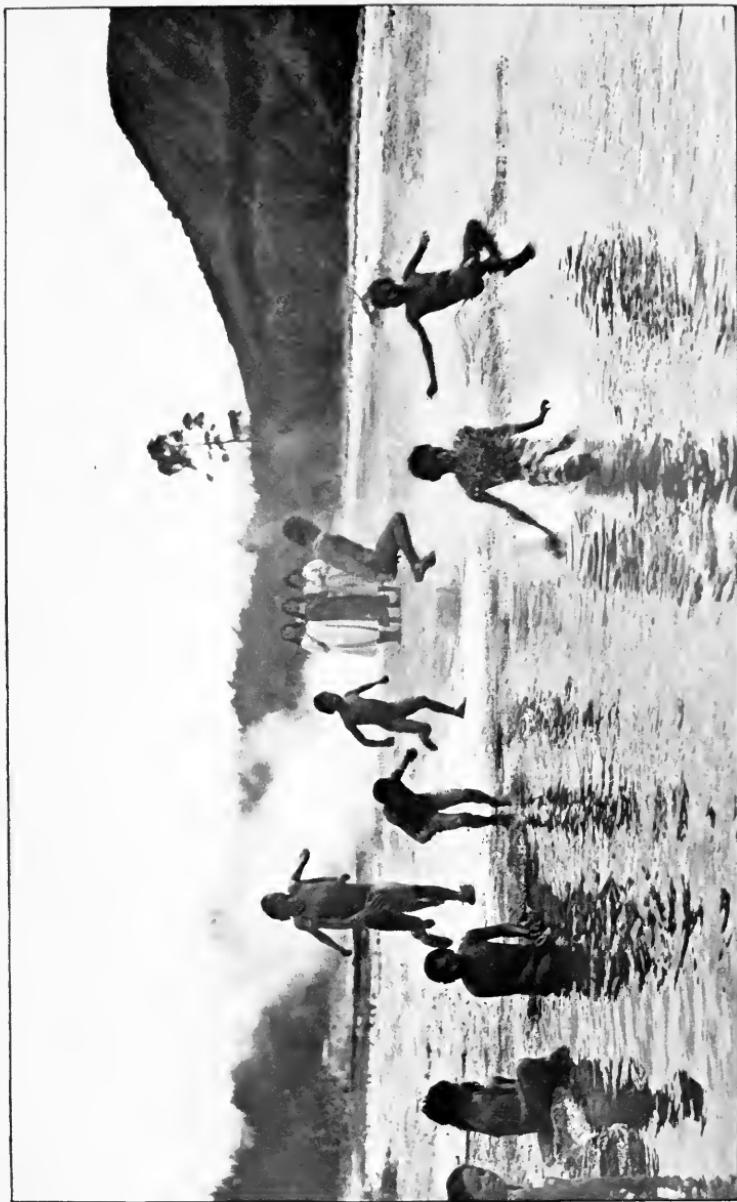
The man to whom he spoke was a burly Scot, and he burst out laughing.

“Back again, Jack?” he said. “Why, it's only a fortnight since you were here. Well, go and get your tickets,” he added.

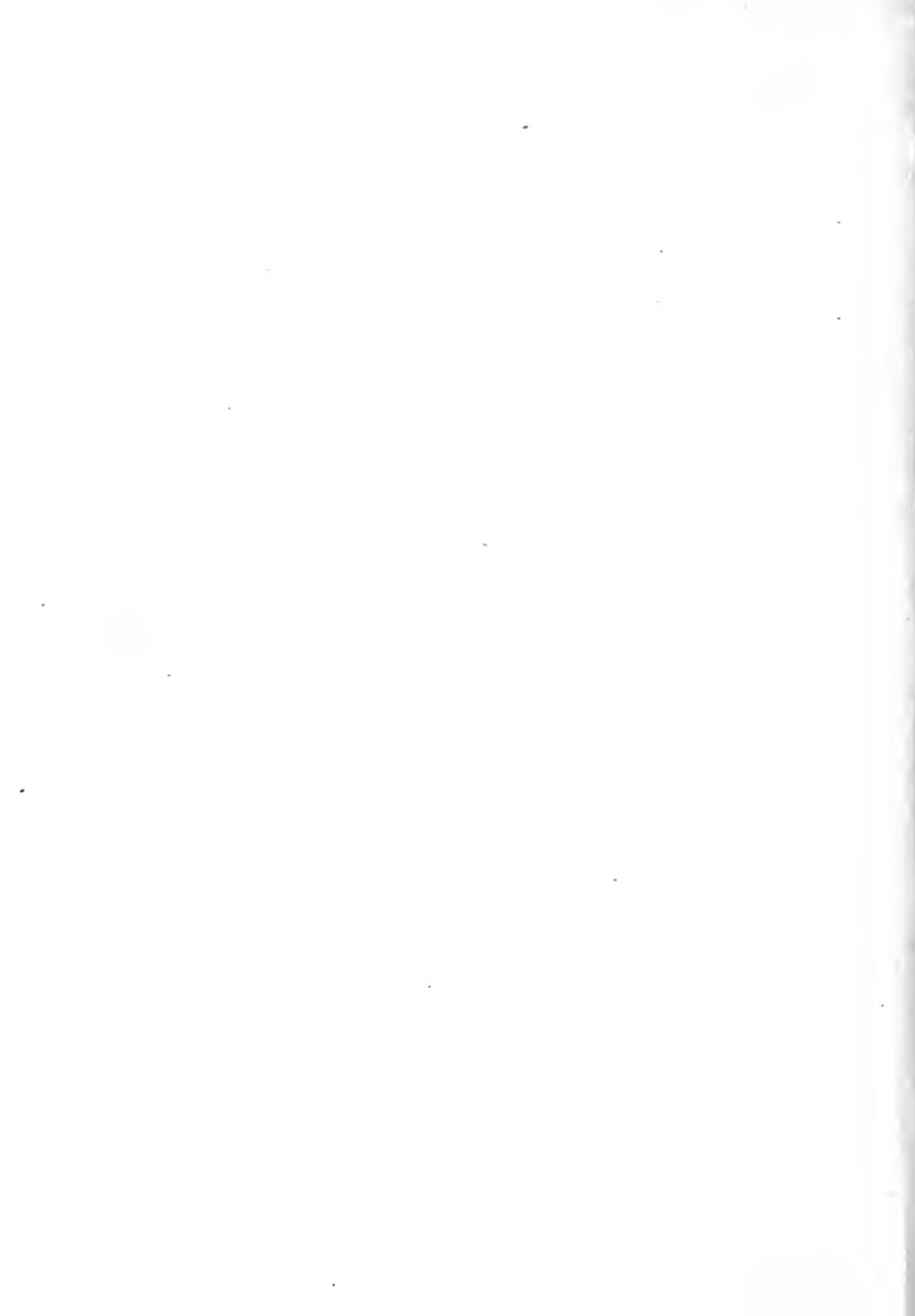
There was no mention of work, I noticed.

Jack nodded to me and strode away, leaving the Scot laughing at one of his jokes.

“Come along, mate,” cried Happy Jack, throw-



MAORIS BATHING IN THE HOT POOLS



ing his swag on to his shoulder again, "this is the sort of station I like. Now then, cook," he added, as he put his head in at an open door, "two tickets, please."

Happy Jack seemed a popular man, and no sooner was his face inside the door than two or three men sang out to him, and in a few minutes they were all laughing and joking. I stood looking on in silence.

Presently I saw the cook hand Jack two scraps of paper, and, having got them, he led the way to the swagmen's hut. This was a long, wooden house, like a barn, with a large fireplace at the far end, and two rows of bunks, similar to those in a cabin on board ship, down each side of the wall. In the centre of the room was a large table. There were already two or three men there when we arrived, and they all greeted Jack and said something to me.

"A new chum," said Jack, explaining my presence. "I'm putting him through his paces. Now, mate," he said, turning to me, "collar a bunk and put your swag in it."

He was soon chatting away at no end of a pace, but all the while he was undoing the straps of his

swag. His ways interested me—there was no doubt he thoroughly enjoyed his life. As soon as he had loosened his blanket he laid it out most carefully in the bunk he had chosen, and then, after folding up the straps, he slipped them into a clean linen bag which contained his clothes and formed the inside of his swag. Next he pulled out a piece of soap, a small towel, a hair-brush, and an almost toothless comb ; then he turned up his sleeves and left the room, remarking over his shoulder that if I wanted a wash I had better follow him.

I dived into my swag, dragged out a piece of soap I had brought with me, and went after him. I had forgotten to bring a towel, so I used my handkerchief instead.

On returning to the hut Happy Jack put his hand into his linen bag again, produced about three inches of looking-glass, and began, in the most methodical way, to comb and brush his hair, beard, and moustaches. This done, he replaced his things, and, putting everything back in his bag, laid it at the top of his bunk, and I saw that it now became a pillow ; but, just before doing this, he pulled out a sixpenny edition of one of Kingsley's books : I think it was "Alton Locke."

The whole performance was so methodical that I could not help watching his every movement. I could see that he had done it night after night for years, and would probably go on doing it till he was too old to walk, and then he would go to the Old Men's Home and die a week afterwards for want of fresh air.

By this time several other men had arrived, and the bunks were beginning to fill up and the conversation became lively: it was chiefly of sheep, cattle, cattle-men, shepherds, and the wrongs of the working man. Many of them knew each other, but others were evidently strangers—new men on the look-out for work. At about 6.30 I heard a bell ring, and, following the crowd that sprang up at the sound, I soon found myself in a large dining-room containing a big table with a long form on either side. The room had about a dozen men in it; they were some of the regular hands who had finished their meal and were smoking by the fire, eager to hear the swagmen's news—for these gentlemen are the daily papers.

When I say that I had a sumptuous feast it hardly describes it, for an ordinary English tramp would drop down dead either at the sight of such

a spread, or, more probably, he would think it must be poisoned and only offered him with a view to ridding the world of his presence.

We began with boiling-hot broth, which was followed by a joint of beef accompanied by two vegetables; then came the pudding, and bread and butter, cheese, cake and brownie (bread with currants in it), and as much tea as we could drink. The whole feast took about three-quarters of an hour to get through, and no one seemed anxious to hurry us. The cook and his assistant, with our aid, cleared the old courses away and set the fresh ones. Throughout there was neither ill-feeling nor unkindness; in fact every one was as jovial as he could be, and every one looked on the whole affair as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world; and I suppose it was, to them. I confess that I felt rather out of it—that sort of feeling that comes over one at a county dinner-party when there is no champagne and the hostess isn't hall-marked seemed to possess me.

After tea, as it was called, we, the swagmen, returned to our hut and sat chatting till about nine o'clock; then, one by one, the men turned in, some falling off to sleep immediately, whilst some read.

I noticed that one or two changed books—a kind of exchange library goes on amongst these men ; each one has a book, and when he has read it he swops it for another.

In the morning we were given breakfast on the same sumptuous scale, and afterwards one or two of the men went round to the kitchen and were given tea, sugar, odd bits of meat and bread, and anything the cook had to spare. This was for their lunch, which swagmen have in the open, for they are never supposed to go to a station till evening. Each swagman carries his "billy" (a tin can for boiling tea), and a "tucker-bag," in which he keeps his lunch.

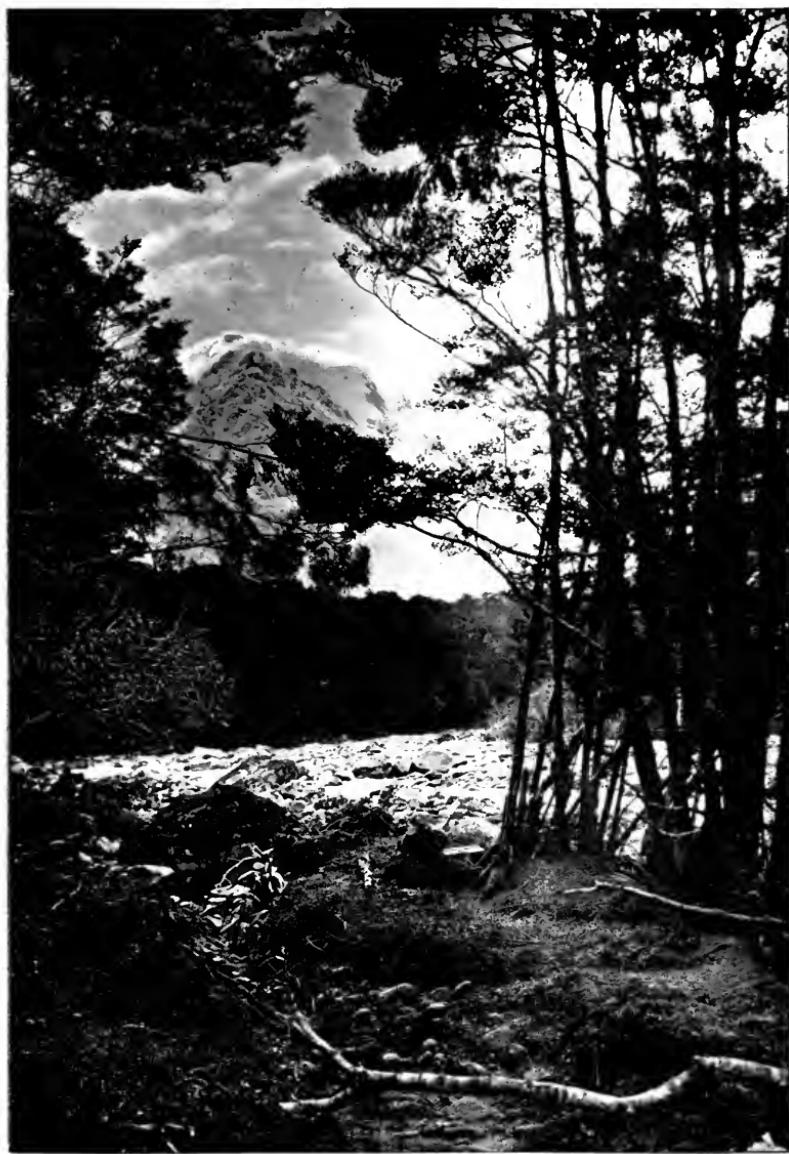
At about ten o'clock the swagmen rolled up their swags and left the station, Happy Jack and I with them, and each man went off in a different direction, as it is considered bad policy to travel in a crowd. Oh, the good times these tramps have compared with their Australian and English brethren! No wonder they don't like work ; work to them must be like stealing to a millionaire—it has no charm.

I had not travelled many miles with Happy Jack before I decided to let him go his way, whilst I

went mine. The reason I did this was because overnight one of the swagmen, seeing I was new at the game, told me that if I went about the country with a renowned sundowner like our friend I would never get work ; also, though Happy Jack was quite amusing and chock-full of anecdotes, his company was irksome to me, for he seemed such a terrible contrast to the beautiful country I was passing through. His bulky, ragged body jarred on me and took the beauty out of things ; so, after lunch, which we had by the side of a pretty little babbling creek, I left him, he wanting to sleep and I to walk.

Oh, the freedom of this wild colony ! There were miles and miles of rich, open country in front of me which seemed to ramble on to the edge of the world in waves of green grass. To the right thick, wooded hills blocked out the view, whilst to the left the scenery was rugged—valleys, hills, bush and grass and space, and, above all, a perfectly cloudless sky of a rich blue. Everywhere there seemed to be space, tremendous space, and tremendous silence ; and yet New Zealand is quite a small island—about the size of Great Britain.

The road I was following was called “The Mutton-



MOUNT TUTOKO, CHEDDAR VALLEY

Track," owing to the number of sheep that travel it on their way to the markets. It is the great high road from the stations to the towns. Everywhere along it sheep and cattle are being reared, though the very largeness of the "runs" enabled me to go for miles without catching sight of either.

For the next few days I wandered along by myself, following the usual routine of calling at a station every night and asking for work. At one I arrived early in the afternoon, and the boss gave me a couple of hours' wood-cutting, for which he paid me two shillings ; but at all the others I received the reply that no extra men were wanted, but that I could stay the night. At each I had excellent meals and was well treated. By now I was getting right into the country, and the stations were becoming larger and farther apart, so that on some days I had to walk about fourteen miles across country with only wheel-ruts and gates to guide me, for the roads from station to station go right through the fields, and are, in fact, no roads at all.

When trying to follow a very vague direction one day I lost myself. Now, to be lost in the bush, if one takes life seriously, is about as nasty an experience as one could wish to have, and it

needs a very big sense of humour to be philosophic under such circumstances. Honestly, I don't think it would worry me much if I got lost now, simply because I know the bush, and if I couldn't get out of it in a reasonable time, I wouldn't mind stopping there, provided I had some matches and a "billy," for there's plenty of food about if you know where to look for it and how to cook it ; but at the time when I got lost I knew neither, and I remember very vividly the peculiar sensations I suffered. It was just midday, and I had been tramping all the morning, when I came to a small river. The day was a dull and sultry one, and the river looked cool ; so, seeking shelter behind a clump of ti-tree, I threw off my swag and hunted for some dry sticks to light a fire. Having found them I next got a long pole, which I drove into the ground at an angle of about 75° , hung the billy of water on it, and set fire to the sticks underneath. In my tucker-bag I had some cold meat, a crust of bread, and a small packet of tea, so, for the time being, the world was very bright, and I lay back with my head on my swag, enjoying the rest and looking forward to my lunch and billy of tea.

As soon as I had finished it, I settled myself

down for a snooze. I was tired with my long tramp, and I knew that my next stopping-place could not be far away, as I had been told at the last station that when I struck the river I was to follow it up for about a mile, when I would see a clump of bush and, through it, the station.

The solitude was lovely, and as I dozed off I listened to the twittering of a few birds, while far away I could just hear the sleepy tinkle of a bullock-bell. There is no sound as sleepy as that slow tinkling when heard far off—*clangle, clangle, clangle*, and then silence, and again the sleepy noise as the beast moves slowly along munching the new grass.

It must have been some hours before I awoke, for the sun was getting low when I sprang up, collected my things, swung my swag over my back, and idled slowly along the banks of the river. The day was heavy, and I felt uncommonly tired in spite of my long sleep, so I looked with some longing for that clump of bush. I must have walked a good three miles before I caught sight of it. The sun was now well on the horizon ; but, in spite of this fact, directly I saw the roof of the station I sat down and pulled out my pipe, for I felt sure that I could get there in twenty minutes, and I was

very tired. As soon as my smoke was finished I took a last look at the station, carefully marking the direction I had to follow, and slipped down the bank with my swag held high over my head to keep it dry as I waded through the river. It was not deep and only came just above my knees. Wringing some of the water from my trousers, I began to search for the track I had been told to expect. I could see no sign of one, but after a little hunting round I came across the wheel-marks of a waggon which must have recently passed through the river, for the water which had dripped from it was still on the ground. I felt sure that if I hurried I could catch up with it.

Vain hope. I trudged on and on, feeling at the time that, if I was going to the station, it must be by a roundabout way. However, I stuck to it, and suddenly the wheel-tracks led me into a small swamp and through a creek. I followed on, but when I reached the other side I could not see a trace of those tracks.

The sun had now gone down, and I knew that in a very short while it would be dark, for there is no twilight in New Zealand, and I naturally began to feel anxious and searched about in a wild and

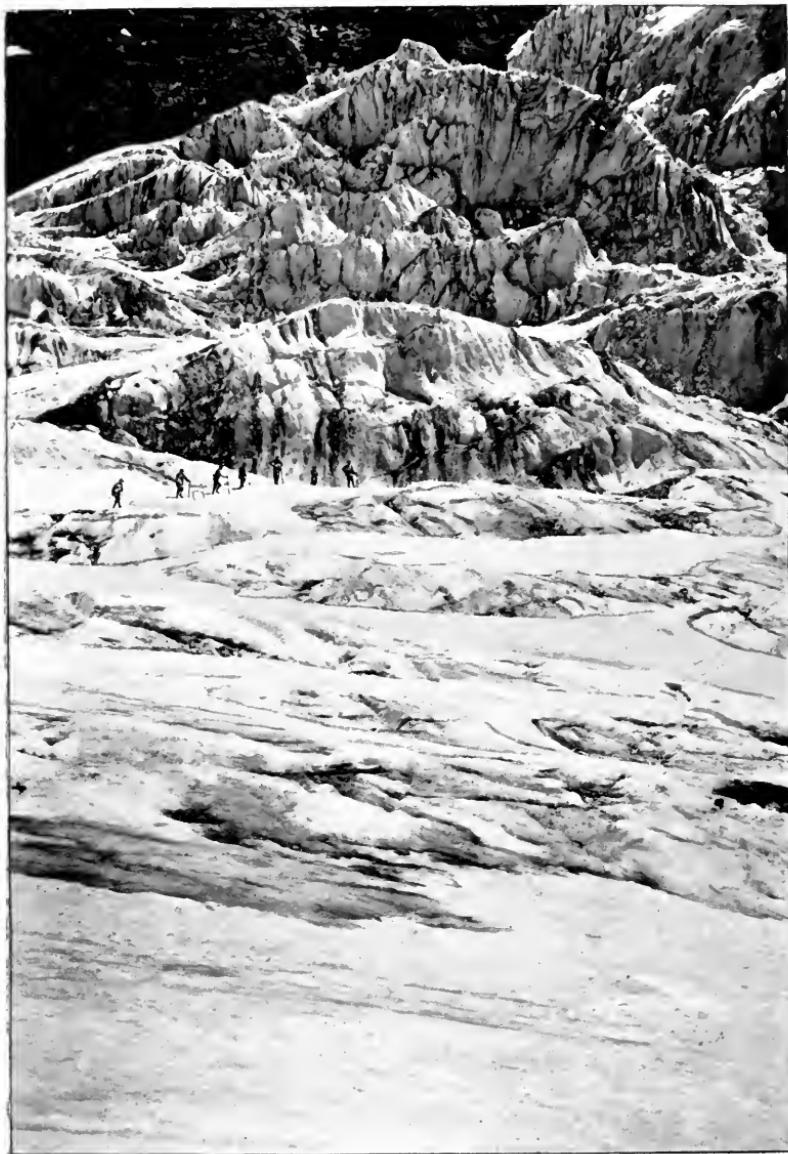
hurried way for some new path, as I had completely lost the other one. More desolate surroundings I had never seen : all around me the land was marshy ; ti-tree and flax and scrub grew everywhere. To the right of me was the thick bush, with no apparent right of way ; behind was stretched the flat, broken ground over which I had been travelling, and ahead there seemed to be nothing but swamp and scrub. I was so completely fogged that for some minutes I stood listening in the hope of hearing the sound of a dog's bark, or the cracking of a stock-whip, or some noise of humanity, but all was as silent as the grave. I began to feel uncommonly lonely, and raised my voice in a loud "coo-ee," but only the echo answered me, and the croaking of dozens of frogs. At last I decided to retrace my steps and endeavour to find another track.

It took me quite half an hour to get back to the river again, but when I saw it I felt a sense of security, as I knew I could now start afresh, and also I knew exactly where the station lay. There was no road visible ; but, as I was certain the bush could not be very large, I thought I would trust to Providence and make a bold dash for it. New

chum as I was, I knew the dangers of trying to pass through the bush, but I was getting desperate and the distance seemed so short.

Anybody, I thought, could walk straight for that little way, but fearing lest I should go wrong, I took care to leave good marks behind me, so that I should have no difficulty in retracing my steps to the river, which had now become quite a home to me ; from its opposite bank I could see the station, and that in itself was a comfort in this lonely spot.

For the first quarter of a mile the bush was thin, and the undergrowth was not sufficient to impede my progress ; but as I went on it became thicker and thicker, and the trees higher and higher, and the darkness more intense. Walking in a straight line became impossible, for these great trees and fallen logs barred my way. Gradually I felt I was going down into a gully ; I could see the tree-tops far beneath me, and a horrible fear came over me that again I was going wrong. From the river the ground had seemed quite level, and I began to think I had travelled more than a mile. The farther I went the more troubled I felt, and before long I was certain that I was astray again.



ON DONNE GLACIER

The gully seemed endless, and in a kind of nervous terror I swung sharply round and began hurriedly to retrace my steps. A large rat jumped down from the branch of a tree in front of me and scuttled through the thick undergrowth. Uncanny feelings began to assert themselves, and I scrambled along as fast as I could, stumbling over fallen branches and getting entangled in "bush lawyer" and "supplejack." The supplejack seemed purposely to twine its long vines round me and clutch my arms and legs, and the more I tugged to free myself the more entangled I became and the more nervous I grew. These vine-like ropes seemed human in their persistence. Each strand had to be parted and separately disentangled before I could proceed. When I got back to the open the perspiration was pouring off me and my heart was thumping against my ribs, and in a sort of panic I doubled my pace until I saw the river again. On reaching it I sank down by its friendly bank, thoroughly exhausted.

The river looked more deep and lonely now as I gazed down at it. I was strangely tired and weak, and felt more like sleeping where I lay than recrossing it, preparatory to taking fresh bearings

and making a fresh start. In the darkness I took a new crossing where the water rose to my armpits. It was terribly cold and made me shiver as I battled through it, but at last I reached the opposite side, and, throwing down my swag, I ran up the bank. There was the station! The white roof and wool-shed—even in the darkness I could see them plain and clear against the sky.

For a moment I shut my eyes, and then opened them again to make sure that what I saw was no mere fancy. It was all right. A light shone from one of the windows, and a dog barked loudly in the distance. The men were evidently closing up for the night.

Filled with fresh energy I made one more start. This time I followed the river farther up, so that I should cross in a straight line to the sheds, but on reaching the opposite bank my way was barred by a steep, bush-covered hill, the sides of which, from the water, were impossible to climb. I determined not to be done this time, so I headed up the stream in order to find some other landing-place beyond the station, and at about two hundred yards higher up I arrived at a ford where the cattle came to drink. I could have shouted for very joy. With a

bound I was out of the water, and a few minutes later was following the cattle-tracks right in the direction in which I knew the station lay.

This time I felt sure I was right. I fancied I could already hear the men talking in their shanties. Vain fancy that it was!

After an hour's weary walking I found myself back at the cattle ford!

The river babbled by. The moon shone on its waters in peaceful serenity. I hated that river now, and turned from it in disgust. Back into the bush I strode, caring nothing which direction I took. A fever seemed to possess me as I stumbled along, barking my shins against the tree-stumps. Presently I fell down exhausted, and must have slept.

When I awoke strange noises filled the bush. The trees groaned and the wind sighed through their branches ; and as I lay and listened I wondered if I were awake, whether these noises were only fancies of a fevered brain, or whether the wind had really risen. The gnawing sensations of hunger began to tear me, and my soaking clothes hung round me, making me shiver all over. Strange ideas began to haunt me, and I started up. I felt that a walk would steady my nerves. I was weak

and tired, but I scrambled along in a vain endeavour to dissipate my fears and bring warmth to my body. I had no idea where I was going ; every way seemed the same. The trees and shrubs all grew alike, and there was no telling one from the other. The fitful flashes of the moon, as they shot through the thick clouds overhead, seemed to cast strange shadows across my path. The wind too was rising, and the boughs of the trees groaned weirdly. Presently a swimming seemed to fill my head ; my limbs refused to move another inch, and again I sank down exhausted—this time by the side of a small creek whose green mossy bank looked restful.

On all sides the tall trees stared down at me. Queer noises made me start, and every now and then I felt as if some unknown horror were upon me. The shadows cast by the moon danced like demons in this wild unearthly grotto, and my brain began to mix the real and the unreal. A sort of haziness came over my vision, and the shadows took shape and danced round me, as if mocking me in my sad plight. The wind gained strength, and howled piteously through the trees.

I felt as if I were going mad. I must get up

and move about. As I rose a clamouring noise broke on my ears almost deafening me. My head swam round ; then I heard a crash, and felt a keen pain shoot through my head. A strange sensation of peace came over me. The imps of the bush went farther and farther away, and the harsh sounds became fainter and fainter. If this was death, I thought, how sweet it was !

It must have been hours afterwards, for the sun was well up in the heavens, when I came back to consciousness. At first a strange feeling of uncertainty possessed me, and I could not collect my thoughts. I wondered, in a vague way, where I was.

Little by little a feeling of unrest came over me, and I began to realise my position. The events of the past night crowded before me, till I remembered everything.

My hands were red with blood, and I became aware of a dull pain in my head. My hair was all clotted with blood, and the broken bough of a tree lay by my side ; its branches half over my body.

The whole ghastly position was before me : I was lost in the bush. Weak, sore, and feeble, I rose slowly to my feet, and crawled to the little stream

to bathe my temples in its muddy, swollen waters. A terrible storm must have raged in the night, for the bush was strewn with broken branches. I was utterly miserable.

The gnawing pangs of hunger alone kept me from lying down again. Surely now, in the daylight, I should be able to find the station. The water refreshed me, and I began to retrace my steps, but the way was rough, and all signs of the path by which I had come had now disappeared. For hours I wandered aimlessly about, getting weaker and weaker, till at last I sank down thoroughly exhausted, and slept, praying that I might never wake again.

A cracking of whips and shouting of men suddenly startled me from my dreams. Hope sprang up within me, and I scrambled to my feet and hurried towards the sound, stumbling and falling as I went.

The shouts of human voices were still audible. It was no mere fancy this time. The rough oaths of the cattle-men were the sweetest of music to me. But their voices were going away, and a frenzy seized me lest I should fail to reach the open in time to attract them.

Suddenly, through the trees, far on a hilltop, I saw a mob of cattle tearing wildly about. Men were rushing here and there rounding them up, and oh! the joy of it, I saw a swagman coming helter-skelter towards me. I was so weak that I just sank on to the ground.

“ Hallo, mate, what’s up? Have you had a run for it too? Damned if I didn’t think the whole blessed mob would be on the top of me ’fore I could get here. You look sick,” he added; “ can I do anything for you?” he spoke roughly but tenderly, as he swung off his swag and knelt down beside me.

As soon as I could I told him my plight, and in a moment he was as busy as he could be, boiling the inevitable billy, and in less than a couple of hours he had me in the station I had been hunting for, and round and round which, I afterwards heard, I had been travelling. The squatter’s wife, when she heard my story, sent me to bed with a big basin of bread and milk, and I slept and slept and slept.

CHAPTER IX

Some experiences with cattle—The work on a big station—The slayer of beasts—A narrow shave and a bit of romance.

Of all the joyous things in the world, I think a good race after a wild heifer is one of the best, provided you have a young cattle horse between your legs and a strong stock-whip in your hand. It makes you feel that life is really worth living; and to get plenty of it, you must either own, or be on, a cattle station.

It was some weeks after my rather unpleasant experience in the bush that I was offered a job on a station half-way between Napier and Wellington.

If a farmer in England has five thousand acres to look after he feels aggrieved, thinks his responsibility is great, wears a worried look, and talks about foreign competition; but in New Zealand things are different, and holdings run into thousands and thousands of acres. Protection holds sway there, and so not only the farmer but everybody

else flourishes. The station on which I was engaged contained somewhere about 75,000 acres, and the boss was generally smiling. There were about thirty regular hands, and in the shearing-time, the busiest season, about forty more were taken on.

The quarters occupied by us were exceptionally comfortable ; the house being a long, low, wooden building with the inevitable corrugated iron roof, contained a large sitting-room where we had our meals, two kitchens, and innumerable bedrooms. Each of the principal men had a separate bedroom, and the under-hands shared a room between two. On this station there were two gentlemen's sons amongst the workmen, also four cadets who were of colonial origin, and from the same stock as the boss ; these, I suppose, were gentlemen, colonial gentlemen ; but I don't like cadets. The boss, or manager—he was not the owner—lived in a very fine bungalow about three hundred yards from our quarters. He had an excellent garden, a good billiard-room, a piano, and a wife. So he ought to have been happy. I suppose his salary was about seven hundred a year ; but he was taciturn, and never confided either his domestic troubles or his financial outlook to me. The only time I

ever had a long conversation with him was when one day I was lounging on the verandah at about 8.30 in the morning. My orders for that day had been given me, and I was to ride to an out-station and assist some men to repair a fence. He came up to me.

“ You are late in starting,” he said—as if I did not know it.

“ Yes, sir, I’m afraid it’s going to rain,” I replied, looking at a cloud that was hovering about in the distance.

“ You are afraid it’s not going to rain, you mean,” he growled, and then passed on.

I did not argue with him, but sauntered into the paddock and chased a horse round it a few times before I succeeded in catching it; then I brought it in and saddled it. I was just putting my foot into the stirrup-iron when the first drop of rain fell. Ten minutes after I had the satisfaction of passing my boss as I was seeking shelter under that self-same verandah.

“ I’m afraid it is raining,” I said.

“ I am afraid it is,” he replied, and went indoors.

The conversational powers of some squatters are not brilliant.

At seven o'clock we had breakfast, and at half-past we were given our orders for the day, which gave us time to catch our horses, if they were needed, and get our lunch from the cook ; we were given our lunch to take with us when working more than a mile from the homestead. Our hours were from 8 to 12 and 1 to 5 o'clock, with a quarter of an hour for smoking at 11 o'clock and 3 o'clock, but these hours were not strictly adhered to unless the boss was about.

My experience was that every man did just about twice as much as the ordinary English labourer and did it twice as well. If they slacked it for half an hour they always made up for it, and they did things thoroughly.

When a man first goes on a station and is not an old hand he is engaged as a "roustabout," which means that he is given jobs which do not require much experience and in which he works under other men ; in this way he soon learns the ins and outs of things. I was a "roustabout" at this station, and I thoroughly enjoyed the variety of work I had to do. One day it was to assist in repairing fences, another I was bush-felling, another cross-cutting, and then I was helping the

shepherds, but the job I liked best was being sent out with the cattle-men.

When the calving season is not on the only cattle that are required are those for killing and eating. I used to be sent out on these occasions with one of the under-cattle-men and we had to bring in a half-dozen good beasts for the slaughter-man to choose from. Sometimes we would have to go as far as ten miles and drive the beasts back. Then there was plenty of fun, for they objected to being driven away from their friends, and showed their displeasure in many little ways. We used to take a couple of cattle-dogs with us, and then on arrival at the place where the fattest beasts were—they are never properly fattened as they are in England, but just allowed to grow at their leisure—we would pick out the best we could see, and then ride headlong in amongst them, and, by the judicious use of our stock-whips, separate them from the others. When once this was done, and our dogs knew which ones we wanted, our real tussle began, for to drive six beasts, especially these wild brutes, is about twice as hard as driving a whole herd ; for when they are in a mob the cattle seldom break away, and if they do, you can get them

back again fairly quickly ; but with six it is different : directly one goes two others will start off in opposite directions, and by the time you have got one back you have lost sight of the others ; but, given good dogs, a heavy stock-whip, and a horse that can go, one can play the very mischief with a bad-tempered beast, and sometimes we did, and brought them home looking very sorry for themselves and regretting their display of temper.

Having landed our six into the paddock adjoining the slaughter-house, the slaughter-man would pick out the one he wanted. He usually sat on the fence at a safe distance and yelled out : "That white-faced brute," or "That angry-looking beast with a broken horn." Then there was more fun ; we had the pleasant job of getting that "white-faced brute" away from the others.

The paddock was about two acres in size, and at one end there was a swing-gate which ran into a small stock-yard, built with posts about three feet thick, with cross-rails of the same dimensions, the height being about eight feet. From this there was a race, or narrow passage made of the same stout posts, and parallel to the end of it was the slaughter-house. Our work was to get the beast

here by hook or by crook, and this meant exciting times for one or both of us, and the slaughter-man just sat on the rail and roared at us while he fingered a short, pointed knife very like a dagger. That man could use the most peculiar oaths I ever heard, and he had the most evil-looking face I ever saw, but he was an excellent man at his trade, and there was nothing he relished more than "pithing" a fighting beast.

When we got our animal safely into the race, which was just broad enough for a full-sized bullock, and barred his retreat, the slaughter-man jumped down from his perch and walked quietly across the paddock—he would not have done it five minutes before for half a sovereign—and then slowly, deliberately, climbed up the posts of the race, carefully dodging the horns of the beast, which now and then struck through the gaps. On the top, leading right over the head of the bullock, was a plank, and on this he stepped; then, squatting down, he eyed the beast, and seemed to gloat over it. He worried at it, drove it this way and that, until he got it in the exact position he wanted; then his face lit up and his eyes blazed, and the next instant there was a gleam of bright steel and

an awful groan and a thud. The sharp knife had shot home into the bullock's head, right behind the horns.

As the beast fell his weight released a spring, a sort of trap which opened into the slaughter-house, and he rolled right in. The man was down on him in a second, and had his mark not been true there would have been a tussle ; but it was true.

It generally took about two hours to kill, skin, and cut up a beast. I did not care for this part of the job, but one grows callous and takes things as they come when one has been a little while in the colony.

When work was over on the station, and our evening meal finished, we used to sit round the fire and yarn, if it was winter-time ; in summer we sat on the verandah and smoked and talked. The conversation of these evenings consisted chiefly of anecdotes, or gossip, or personal adventures, and many's the good yarn I've heard round that great big, open fire, the chimney of which we used to clean out by throwing a mugful of kerosene on to the flames ; if there was any soot about it had to go, but I do not recommend the practice, as it has its dangers.

Nearly all the men had travelled, and between us there was hardly a spot in the civilised and uncivilised parts of the world that one of us didn't know something about. There were men there who had been soldiers, sailors, explorers, estate owners, squatters, even an ex-stockbroker ; and on the next station there was an ex-parson, but he was such a common brute that I did not cultivate his acquaintance. On this station my particular chum was an Englishman who had seen palmy days in his own country, but had run through his money and taken to shepherding. He was head shepherd, and, as he had a room of his own, we used to go into it and shut ourselves off from the others. Sometimes we gambled for sticks of tobacco, and sometimes we yarnt far into the night about the "old country" and the things we had done and ought not to have done.

In the calving season, which began soon after I arrived, nearly all the "roustabouts" were ordered to work with the cattle-men, and for weeks were out from daylight till dark mustering. When cows have their calves they become mighty vicious, and if by chance you get in between a cow and her offspring it's "mind your eye, Mrs. Murphy," for

the brute doesn't stop to argue, she just comes slap at you and your horse, and if you are not on the look-out your horse is, and before you know what has happened the horse has swung round and is waiting for you to apply your whip, and then when the rush comes he springs aside ; so if you are not ready you find yourself struggling on the ground at the mercy of a merciless cow ; sometimes, though very seldom, your horse is not quick enough, and both of you get the full force of the cow's horns. I only remember a horse being gored once, and I was on it. It was my fault, for I thought I knew better what to do than my horse. Through my inexperience I had got in between two cows, and their respective calves were muddled up ; I began slashing away right and left at them to try to get them right, when both the angry mothers came for me, one on each side. My horse wanted to make a dash for it and let them collide with each other and fight it out between them, but I wanted to get them into the stock-yard ; so I pulled my gee round and then struck one beast full across the face with my whip. She turned tail all right, but I was not quick enough for the other, and her horn ripped the side out of my poor mount ; I

was shot into the air, and when I touched ground I had to run like steam and spring over the stock-yard rails, or I should have been served the same.

Directly we had the cattle into the home paddocks we then had to run them into the stock-yards, leaving their calves behind. From there they had to be driven, one by one, into a long race similar to that used in the slaughter-house yard, and when their progress was stopped and they were bailed up, we had to milk them. A bar was run through just in front of their hind-legs to prevent them from kicking. Of course the milking had not to be done thoroughly, but the cows had to be relieved of some of their milk, as the calves could not take it all. The milk, naturally, was not kept; the cows were just milked on to the ground and then let loose, to be joined the next instant by their bellowing calves. It is extraordinary how quickly a calf can find its mother. I have seen a hundred calves and a hundred cows all let loose, and in ten minutes each calf has found its mother; and the same with sheep, though, to us poor mortals, there seems very little difference between one ewe and another; but it's a poor lamb that doesn't know its own mother, I suppose. This exciting form of milking had to

go on for about a week, until the calves were old enough to take all the milk ; then their mothers were left alone and allowed to dry off naturally.

After this work came the branding of the calves, which was a thankless job ; a calf is small, but he can kick and struggle most fearfully, and when the hot iron gets on to his back and the smoke gets into your eyes the job becomes an uninteresting one ; but still, it has to be done, so you do it and make merry over the task.

As soon as this is over the sheep begin their little escapades, and they require far more attention, as they not only keep you on the watch all day, before they lamb, but for a week or two after, and then the little ones have to have their wagging tails cut and their ears marked. There may be about 70,000 of them, so you can reckon on having a good many thousand to handle each day. And how they smell ! This is a beastly job, and I never met any man who liked it.

Then, in the shearing season, there is no end of work. You are with sheep all day, you dream of them all night, and when you are not out of doors with them you are in a stuffy wool-shed ; but it is all interesting work, especially watching the shearers

and the wool-sorters and the men who dump the wool into the bales and bind them up : both these last acts are done by machinery. Finally the day comes when the drays have to be loaded up, and you sit on your box and drive a team of six horses into the nearest town. Aye ! and how you enjoy the air and the rest ! And your horses seem to understand that you are not in a hurry, and mouch along as if in sympathy with you. When you get to the town—well, then you generally enjoy yourself for a day or two before you go back for the next load. It is a harmless life, and, in spite of the many little things you don't like doing, there are heaps you do enjoy, and the men you work with are right good fellows, so the work seems more like play.

The wages on these back stations are good, varying from fifteen shillings a week and tucker—which means, in this case, board and lodging—up to forty shillings a week for the head shepherd.

There was a little romance concerning one of the shepherds on this station which, for a time, looked as if it was going to be his ruin ; but it had its humorous side, so I will tell it. He was a gentleman, and my boon companion, and often, when we were out together, I noticed that he became very



A TYPICAL TOWNSHIP—BFALEY



silent, and once or twice let a hint fall that there were breakers ahead of him. I did not press for his confidence, but one evening, when we were chatting over our pipes in his room, he startled me by looking up sorrowfully and asking me if I had ever been in love.

I admitted that once or twice I had gone off my food.

“Then you don’t know what it is to have a hopeless passion?” he said, with a big sigh.

I confessed that I did not, but assured him that, young as I was (at that time), if I had a passion I would take particular care it was not hopeless.

“Then,” he exclaimed, “you would advise me to plunge?” I thought he looked frightened.

“That depends,” I said.

“Well, I’ll tell you the whole story; but, by Heaven, if you let a word of it escape you I’ll kill you!”

“Right you are,” I said, “but make it a sudden death—shoot straight, if the occasion arises.”

“Damn you!” he roared; “will you be serious? I must tell some one; these fools here can’t help me, and you can.”

Had my chum been less distraught I could have

laughed. He was a fine, big fellow, and, as he walked up and down the room, he looked the embodiment of strength. His sleeves were rolled up, and I could see the muscles of his arms working.

“ Sit down, Bob,” I said, “ and don’t be an ass.”

He sat down.

“ Now light your pipe again,” I suggested.

He knocked the ashes out on his gaiters and slowly refilled his briar. “ You know,” he began, “ there’s a horse show at Hastings. Well, last year I was there, and I met her. I was stopping at the hotel, and she was staying with friends, and—well, hang it! I fell in love with her the first day I saw her. She rides like a——”

“ Duchess,” I suggested.

“ Yes, and she’s——”

“ Never mind the description,” I put in; “ the thing is, does she return your love?”

“ Yes, by Heaven, and that’s where the trouble is; if it wasn’t that she loves me I wouldn’t care a hang: I could bear all the misery of it myself, but I hate to see her suffering.”

“ Then there are reasons why you——”

“ Yes. It’s like this: when I first got to know

her I didn't ask her name ; in fact, we just began to talk at the show, and she was keen on horses, and we got pally, and I asked her to meet me again, and she, just for the fun of the thing, did. I used to call her my princess, and I was her prince, and we just let ourselves go, neither of us dreaming that we would fall in love. Then, one day, she told me she had to go back to her home, and she looked rather glum.

“ It was a blow to me, but I knew that I was in love with her, so I told her, and begged her to marry me. The poor girl was in an awful state. She abused herself and cried, and said she ought to have told me—but she had not thought I would fall in love. Well, to cut a long story short, she was married, and, to make matters worse, was the wife of one of my oldest friends, a man I had not heard of for three years.”

“ Go on,” I said, as he stopped.

“ We determined to cut the whole thing and never see each other again, and we didn't, till six months ago, when I met them both by accident in Napier, and my friend asked me to go and stop with them. I tried to refuse, but I couldn't. I went, and then I saw that she was tired of him.”

"And that she had transferred her affections to you," I said.

"Yes."

"And you have been writing to each other since?"

"Yes."

"And now you are contemplating an elopement?"

"Yes."

"And he still loves her?" I asked.

"Desperately."

"And he's your friend?"

"More than a friend; we are both——"

"Oh, I see," I answered; "then there is only one thing to do."

"And that is?" he asked eagerly.

"Fall in love with somebody else," I said.

"Good-night, old chap," I added, and, as I was going, he gripped my hand.

"Thanks," he said, and I could see he was better for his chat.

Six months afterwards I was in Wellington, walking quietly along Ingestre Street, when I felt a heavy hand laid on my shoulder.

"By Jove!" I cried, "is it you? And how's the romance?"

“Oh, that’s all right,” he replied, laughing ; “it was merely a passing fancy. I’m married now. Come up and see my wife ; she can’t ride, but, by Jove ! she can play the piano.”

I never met a man so enthusiastic about his own wife as he was. He implored me to come and see her. So I did, not once or twice, but several times, and the fellow talked of nothing but her every time I met him, and always dragged me up to tea or dinner, and she played divinely, and was every bit as nice as he made her out, and—if I had not left Wellington when I did I should have fallen in love with her myself. It’s foolish to rave about your wife to another man.

Oh, happy evenings ! Oh, irony of fate !

CHAPTER X.

I leave the station and meet a half-caste—I go to a *tangi* and sleep in a Maori pah—My thoughts and my experiences—A word on Maori maids and Maori wives.

THE reason I left Mr. Blank's station seemed to trouble him, as he confessed that he was interested in me because "I had a respectable face." I have had my face called all sorts of things since I first went to school with it, but never "respectable." It seems, however, to have been the cause of getting me several jobs, for not only did it get me this one, but the editorship of a Church paper ; it also took me on the stage, and afterwards got me employed as a singer, and, finally, has stuck to me ever since I was born—which is saying a lot for its good nature, because I've never treated it over-kindly ; several times it has been most rudely banged about by irate people, through obstinacy on my part ; but still, there it is, and my squatter friend was very disappointed because I told him I was going to take it away.

"Why are you going? Aren't you getting enough pay?" he asked.

"Yes," I said, "but all the pay in the world wouldn't induce me to clean your boots."

"So that's it," he said; "but you don't mind milking cows, or doing any other rough work?"

I told him I liked it, but that there was a difference and a distinction, and this new order of his jarred on me; but, though I explained the position to him for half an hour, he couldn't see my point, and said I was a fool and that my idiotic pride would be my downfall. Poor chap! I felt sorry for him because he couldn't see the difference between cleaning out his cow-sheds and polishing his boots.

It was a glorious day when he handed me my cheque for £20, and I felt full of good spirits, for I was off again, without the faintest idea where I would pull up or what new experiences lay before me. I had made no plans, but just thought I would wander towards Napier, and perhaps spend a week or two there; so I took as direct a line as I could for that town. It was about forty miles, as the crow flies, but the road made it considerably more. Of course I had come a roundabout way to it, and had no intention of returning by that route; so I

jogged along as merrily as a sand-boy and struck a station just at dusk, where I stopped the night. I suppose I covered nearly twenty miles the second day, for I found myself at a queer little township called Waipawa. There was a tiny little creek running by it which I had to step over, and, to my astonishment, whilst I was doing so, I saw a tremendous bridge spanning this wee drop of water. I nearly died with laughing at the sight, but I learnt, on inquiry, that this little creek, which I think was called the Tutaekuri, was a "roaring, raging river" in the winter-time, and that it had carried away many bridges in its eagerness to reach the sea. Since then I have seen several similar ones in New Zealand; in the summer they are mere trickling streams, but a glance will show that they have big banks on either side which have been well washed by angry waters. When the rivers do rise there they rise with a vengeance, and come sweeping down like avalanches.

Whilst at this interesting township I fell into conversation with a half-caste Maori, in whom I became interested; so I asked him to join me at lunch. We were both at the same hotel (anything is called an hotel in New Zealand if beer is sold



MAORIS KISSING



there), and though he was not an educated Maori (I think he was a station hand) he told me more about his race than I had ever heard before, and, seeing I was interested, he invited me to come to a pah that was only a day's walk from where we were, and stay there for a bit. He had never been there himself, but that didn't matter in the least, as no Maori refuses hospitality to another, or even to a white man ; in fact, they always seem glad to see you, and will not only put you up, but give you of their best.

“*Haere mai ! haere mai !*” is the call you often hear when you are passing within hailing distance of a pah, and it means “You are welcome.” If you don't accept the invitation the Maori is offended. I have often heard it, and nearly always accepted it, for though their meals are rough, you need not eat much.

The pah we went to was one about ten miles from Hastings, and I think it was called Tomona ; anyhow, it was a good big place, and when we arrived there the inhabitants were in the middle of a big *tangi*. A chief had died, so a feast was being prepared, and Maoris from miles around were congregated to take part in it.

I soon found that I was the only white man there—*Pakehas*, the Maoris call us—but the fact didn't seem to bother them, so I did not let it bother me.

A *tangi* is a funeral, and also a jollification. The funeral comes first, and the fun follows closely on its heels—so closely, in fact, that no sooner have certain rites been performed than preparations for a feast of gigantic proportions are begun, whilst the dead man is lying in state, and the women are still weeping. The terrible and most trying part of a *tangi* is to hear the women moaning. They howl for hours, and the noise they make can be heard for miles; it goes on in a dreary and monotonous way until their time of mourning is up; then, like a shot, they stop and hurry off to the feast; but if you did not know them you might easily think they meant it, and you would feel horribly sorry for them. The deeds of the departed one are recited, and many speeches are made by his near relatives and one or two visitors from other pahs and tribes. This sort of thing goes on all the morning, but the feast continues till every scrap of food in the pah has been eaten. In preparing these banquets the natives often sell everything they possess in order to buy food, and when a big

chief has died, if you hurry to the pah, you can buy houses for ridiculously low prices. Many pahs have been so cleared out of provisions, and their occupants of money, for the sake of a *tangi*, that they have had to migrate to another pah until their crops are up again, or till some stroke of luck has brought them fresh fortune. There is a splendid sense of good-fellowship amongst them, and one village will always provide food for another, and then when they, in their turn, are reduced to starvation, they will go on to the next one. A Maori never dreams of refusing food and shelter to any one, whether he knows him or not. They are the most irresponsible lot of people in the world; but they are clever, and soon get on their feet again. Each pah is self-supporting, and both the men and women labour at the crops of taro, pumpkin, kumara, maize, potatoes, and other vegetables. Pigs and poultry also help to feed the hungry mouths, and many of the men go out to work, and so add money to the pah. There is a kind of commonwealth system amongst them, but I could never quite understand it, as the system seems not only vague, but also optional as regards whether it is conformed to or not.

Nowadays many of the Maoris cultivate their land on exactly the same principles as the white men, and many of them are very wealthy, but there are still thousands who jog along in a happy-go-lucky way, as nearly like their ancestors did as civilisation will allow them.

In the King Country—that portion of New Zealand which has been set apart for the Maoris, and which they are not allowed to sell—the natives live in a much wilder condition ; of course they are not savages, though their pahs are somewhat different from those nearer civilisation ; they are not as good in some respects, but more like what they were prior to our invasion. Around them short stakes are driven into the ground and laced together with flax, forming a strong fence of about ten feet high, but what the idea of it is, or was, I can't say, unless to keep their children from straying or the rats from entering. It would never have stopped a charge, though it might have acted as a shelter against missiles, and would probably have delayed an enemy's advance for about ten minutes.

The pah I was visiting had none of these safeguards. It was a big, scattered settlement, with two large meeting-houses, about forty or fifty huts, and

several ordinary, up-to-date New Zealand houses. These belonged to the chiefs, and were furnished in the most extraordinary fashion : the rooms were hopelessly muddled up, and nearly all the beds were in the kitchen, where the household evidently slept because it was warm. There was no door in one of them, and nearly all the windows had been broken ; but this did not seem to worry the owner in the least. He showed me over it with great pride. The corrugated iron roof seemed to be the thing he admired most. He took me outside at least three times to show it to me from different points of view, and I believe if I had pressed him he would have had it taken off, so that I could have inspected it more closely. He glanced with scorn at his less fortunate brethren's huts, for they had only thatched grass roofs ; none of them contained more than one door, and none had windows. He had his choice of rooms to sleep in, he explained : " Me take blanket, lie down dinin'-room, parlour, kitchen, anywhere."

" On roof ? " I asked.

The old chap smiled. " No feaar ; too much slide."

I was so interested in looking round that I regret to say I paid little attention to the ceremonies attach-

ing to the burial of the late lamented chief, and what became of him ultimately I don't know ; but, when passing his wharé, I looked in and saw him stretched out in state on a kind of bier, which, I think, on ordinary occasions, was used as a dining-table. By his head two mourners stood, whilst, crouched down on the floor at their feet, were two women huddled up in their shawls, so that I could see nothing of them, but their melancholy droning was ghastly. Two more couples were crouching at each side of the door, and were also moaning. Men came in and out and glanced at the dead body, and then passed on, showing very little sorrow or sentiment—the women did their share for them, I suppose. Then, I remember, the moaning suddenly came to a stop (I whispered a prayer of thanksgiving), and every one made for the row of long tables that were packed up with eatables in a field just opposite. I suppose there were fifty feet of tables ; it reminded me of a big school treat, except for the row and chattering that was going on. There were not half enough knives and forks to go round, so only the ultra-civilised were permitted to use them, whilst the others played grab with the potatoes, the meat, and other delicacies ; the beer (there were gallons and

gallons of it) was handed round in buckets, and each man took as big a swill as he could and then passed it on. The women squatted in bunches by themselves ; they had no tables, but used the ground. As the hours sped on the noise increased till, at about four in the afternoon, those who were not in a drunken sleep crawled off into the bush, and I saw no more of them.

The dishes, empty buckets, knives, forks, spoons, and plates lay about all over the place just where they had fallen, and nobody seemed interested in their ultimate fate.

“Well,” said my half-caste friend, “I’m afraid you will take a bad impression of us away with you after this ; but, I assure you, we are not like it always. A chief does not die every day,” he added—I thought rather sorrowfully.

“We have feasts in our country,” I told him, “and they compare very favourably.” He seemed relieved.

“Come with me ; I’ve got a buggy, and I will drive you to another pah, where some of my relations are. We can sleep there ; I’m afraid this place will be pretty rowdy to-night.”

As I wasn’t particular where I went, I agreed.

So we drove off, and at about seven o'clock arrived at a quiet little pah, different in every way from the one we had left. In this there was only one meeting-house and about a dozen wharés. A crowd of little naked urchins clambered about the horse's head when we stopped, and then jumped up alongside me. They were jolly little things, but my companion did not care about them, so roared at them to clear off, emphasising his words with good, sound smacks on their naked backs ; but they only laughed, and scampered away. The dogs were not half so easily dispersed ; there were dozens of them, and had it not been for our whip we should have had a bad time of it. However, we got our horse out with the assistance of a couple of young Maoris who knew my friend ; then we put the buggy out of harm's way, and the horse we let loose in an adjoining paddock.

As neither of us had partaken of the feast at Tomona, we were glad to set to when our friends offered us some dinner. There were plenty of natives about, both men and women, but they seemed to take no notice of us, and we followed our friends to their wharé, where dinner was being prepared by a young and rather good-looking

Maori woman, who squatted on the ground outside, in front of a fire.

The meal consisted of pork, cooked Maori fashion—in the ground. The potatoes were boiled with their skins on in an old kerosene tin over a camp-fire, and the tea was made in the usual billy. We all sat on the floor of the wharé, and not only ate and drank all there was, but thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. The two young natives (I believe they were half-castes) had both been in England, and one had been with the football team: so our conversation was chiefly about the old country. At about nine o'clock we were each given a blanket (I used my own, which I had with me), and then our two companions led the way to the meeting-house. It was quite dark, so we had to grope our way, but we found the house through the glow of light that came from it.

In front of nearly all these houses there is a big verandah-like porch and a small door in the centre, leading from which is a kind of aisle, and on both sides the Maoris were stretched out like mummies, wrapped from head to foot in their blankets. There were two of these rows, one on each side of the aisle, and the sleepers lay about

two feet apart. I suppose there were about twenty on each side. In the centre of this long, low hut was a smouldering fire which filled the whole place with a smarting smoke that made my eyes run and irritated my throat. Our friends led us right down the aisle, and then, without saying good-night or anything else, they both stretched themselves out, rolled their blankets round them, covered up their heads, and, I suppose, fell asleep.

Seeing the thing was customary, I did the same very soon afterwards ; for I found, on lying down, that the smoke did not bother me. My particular friend, or, I should say, host, was soon wound up, and so I just lay and looked about me.

It was a queer place. The roof slanted nearly to the ground and was covered inside with very fancifully plaited flax, whilst the centre pole which supported the thatch was coloured red and white, or had been before the smoke had changed it. The posts that supported the sides were all elaborately carved with weird figures of human beings, and matting covered the intervening space. The centre aisle was only cut off by what a carpenter would call a four-by-six plank, and the fire just stopped in its place owing to the hole its predecessors had

burned for it. A man squatted by it, adding fuel every now and then. This fire is not so much to warm the room as to light it, and is supposed to keep the *tipu* (devil) away.

There was complete silence in this long, queer hut, except now and then when one of the sleepers moaned ; and as I lay thinking, an irresistible desire came over me to give an unearthly shout and see what effect it would have. I wondered if these dead looking things would all bob their heads up out of their blankets ; were they all men, or both men and women, and were there any children ? Suddenly I saw the thing next me was a girl : there was a wisp of black hair showing outside the blanket. I wondered what she was like ; and then I heard a child whimper ; presently all was quiet again, and I suppose I fell asleep, for I remember no further speculations. When I awoke there were only about ten mummies left, and, one by one, these arose, threw their blankets over their arms, and walked out. They did not seem to lie a moment after they awoke ; there was no stretching or yawning ; they just got straight up, and that was all. It seemed so uninteresting, but I suppose it's civilisation that makes us lie abed dreaming, and makes the bed

seem so comfortable after our morning cup of tea.

When the last one had gone I gave my friend a dig to rouse him, and we went down to a creek and had a good, refreshing dip. We were not the only ones, for we found quite a dozen others splashing about, both males and females. One thing that particularly struck me at the time was that the men took no more notice of the women than if they had been properly attired in bathing costumes, and really not half as much as civilised men take when gay and beautiful nymphs are prancing about in full bathing attire at our fashionable seaside resorts.

The nude figure conjures up no romance in the eyes of most natives: I suppose it is use. I have also noticed that Maori women strongly object to white men seeing them in nature's garb, unless they know them; then they look on them as members of the family.

The full dress of a Maori woman is very beautiful, or was, before it got mixed up with European skirts. In some parts of the country the girls still dress in the old style, with a beautiful feather-mat hanging from their shoulders, leaving part of their neck

and arms bare and the lower part of the legs. These mats are most elaborately made, and take ages to complete. The best are composed of a flax background, to which kiwi feathers are attached. They are beautifully soft, and must be very warm. Other mats are made of flax and skins and string, but no Maori lass of importance would wear anything but a feather one. This and a green stone ornament which hangs round their necks constitute their whole outfit, and, for simplicity and elegance, commend me to it: though I fear that some of my maiden aunts and anaemic cousins would look somewhat out of place in it; so perhaps, after all, our own fashions are more suitable for our relations. The men also wear mats of similar construction, unless when working; then they sometimes only wear a loin-cloth, or mat which leaves the upper part of their bodies free.

Now, I have often heard people say that they cannot understand a white man marrying a Maori; but I think it is only because they consider the Maoris are something like niggers, whereas they are about as fine a race of creatures as there is on this earth, and the women, some of them, can give many a white woman points in behaviour and in education.

I would far sooner marry a dozen Maori women than one domestic servant. There is something most fascinating about a well-educated Maori maid ; leaving her beautiful, dark, lustrous eyes out of the question, she has a wonderful knack of putting you at your ease, and has tact that would surprise you, whilst her ways and manners, if she likes you, are charming. I have also heard it said, " How sad it is that the Maoris are dying out !" but I think one of the chief causes is that the Maori girls are being snapped up by white men, and so the race is becoming half-caste. Though I know plenty of beautiful Maoris I would not marry one myself, but I can safely recommend them to my friends, for I know that they make excellent wives, and they will bring their children up so that they don't cry, which is more than a white woman can do. A Maori child seldom cries ; if it does its mother thinks the devil is in it and drops it. The women are virtuous and reliable, and when once they are married, they are absurdly moral : they won't even look at another man. Before that event, however, their code of morality is somewhat different from ours, though they cannot be called immoral. One peculiarity about the race is that they vary so in colour and in

facial expression. Some tribes have the flat-nosed, thick-lipped, dark-skinned propensity of savages in full, whilst others are much lighter in colour and have quite English features. Some of the half-castes are beauties in the largest sense of the word, and if brought to England they would cause a sensation during any season. They are strong and big, and have perfectly natural figures ; in fact, they are awfully nice—some of them.

CHAPTER XI

More about the Maori males and females—The *huku*—A few words about birds—A hurdle race on the river—Maori sportsmen, and a tussle with a shark.

THE last link between the savage cannibals of fifty years ago and the Maoris of to-day can be found in the *huku*. When dancing, the Maoris forget civilisation, the blood that made them great is stirred up anew, and they are carried back to the days of old. It is when they are dancing that an observer can see the fierce undertone that runs through this harmless exhibition, and can easily perceive the dormant power and vitality that bore these men and women along ; that stood by them in their first struggles ; that made them conquerors, and, above all, physically the finest specimens of mankind in the world.

You can see the *huku* danced for a couple of shillings, and even then it is not bad, for sometimes the dancers get worked up and forget the two bob ;

but to see it properly danced is one of the most weird and stirring things imaginable.

I have seen the real thing only once, and I shall never forget it. I was staying with a half-caste who owned a very fine cattle station and several good race-horses, and we heard that there was a big Maori gathering at a pah within riding distance. It was a political meeting, and really an unfriendly one, for certain Maoris had come to the conclusion that the treaty of Waitangi, which we made with them years ago, had not been properly adhered to by us; so, had my friend not been a big and influential man, I would not have gone: not that I feared an outbreak, but that I knew I should probably have been insulted or asked to leave. When we arrived there the whole pah was crowded with Maoris, who were all more or less boisterous, and the preponderance of men was very noticeable. They had come from all parts of New Zealand, and were a splendid lot of fellows, of unique proportions. Some were in ordinary European dress, whilst others were in the usual half-and-half rig—trousers, shirt, no shoes, and either a blanket or a Maori mat over their shoulders; some wore hats, and others had only a white feather.

in their hair. The men were congregated in little groups talking wildly, and one man, evidently a chief, was delivering a long oration. The women were squatting about in the porches of their wharés, some rubbing noses, others staring blankly before them, and listening to the speech in a desultory way. Dozens of children were running about regardless of everybody and everything ; they and the dogs were only intent on getting as much fun out of the proceedings as they could with as few kicks and smacks as possible.

When we were tired of listening to the speech we went to a chief's hut, and were entertained by his daughter, who was a remarkably fine specimen of a woman, and could speak English as well as I could. She gave us tea and kept us laughing from the time we entered her hut till we were called to see the *huku*. We had put our horses up, and now hurried to the place where the dance was to be held. The girl accompanied us. She was as nearly as possible dressed in Maori fashion, and looked remarkably handsome with her long black hair hanging loosely over her shoulders and her splendid feather-mat trailing to the ground. She was not tattooed and her skin was very light, whilst

her eyes—well, they were Maori eyes, and had a knack of dancing, and held a world of meaning in them.

When we reached the ground we saw a long row of men lined up ; they had discarded many of their clothes, leaving their legs and arms free ; they all had clubs or sticks, and as they gripped them the great muscles in their arms and backs stood out magnificently.

As soon as their leaders (*Teko Tekos*) had taken their places and given the word the others began to move, at first in a gentle rhythmic way ; and then suddenly the *Teko Tekos* let forth a roar that was enough to strike terror into the heart of a nervous white, when the whole row of warriors seemed to throw themselves bodily into the dance, and the earth shook with the thud of their feet, and the hills echoed with their savage shouts.

As the dance progressed the pace increased—it was a stamping, thundering, muscle-working dance that thrilled every one, and made even my placid skin creep, whilst the girl at my side was heart and soul in the dance ; her whole body was moving, quivering, and her eyes rolled, and I could see her feet gently keeping time. As I stood by her,

watching, I could easily fancy how it was that these savage women in the old days were the means of working their men up to deeds of valour. It was the women who incited them to lose their heads, and go almost mad in the war-dances before they left their pahs for the scenes of battle. Fine, brave fellows, who, though they loved to slay and kill and eat their enemies, loved better still the hard struggles to kill them. How often has that tale been told of the chief who had our men at bay, but refused to take advantage of the situation by cutting off their ammunition and food supplies, because he knew they would not be able to fight without them. It was the fierce struggle they loved ; they wanted no walk-over. "Ka whawhai tonu! Ake! Ake! Ake!" (We will fight for ever and ever and ever!) is the well-known battle-cry of the Maoris.

When one sees these fine fellows with their eyes rolling, their tongues out, and every sinew in their bodies working in a mad dance that shakes the earth, it needs no stretch of imagination to see them rushing headlong into certain death, with not a thought so long as the fight was fair and the end meant glory.

I have seen the Maori girls dance the *huku* too, and I have seen some of them get so carried away that they have torn their mats from their shoulders. They seem to be possessed with devils when once the dance has got hold of them, and you see the real savage in them. When once they begin the men follow, and before you know where you are every man and woman by you is dancing, and their hoarse, guttural shouts stir you as no waltz tune does, thank goodness !

There are other dances besides the war-dances—pretty ones as well as weird ones ; but they have not the savage grandeur the *huku* has.

I happened to be at the Hippodrome recently, and saw the African Pigmies dancing their war-dance, and I remembered the last war-dance I had seen, and roared with laughter. These poor little pygmies looked like undersized chickens scratching the ground compared with those mighty warriors of New Zealand, and I could not help thinking what would have happened if they had been compelled to fight them. The highest and the lowest race of savages, what an amusing meeting it would have made ! The Maoris would have sneezed them off the face of the earth, as they wanted to do with

the Boers—which reminds me that it was a bitter pill to the Maoris that they were not allowed to take part in that war; but had they done so there would have been an awful row, because they cannot stand guerilla warfare, and they would have got quite angry with De Wet. They had a song at the time called “Kiki ta Poa” (Kick the Boer), and it was full of allusions to the Boer weakness for hiding and running away.

In all their fights, both with our troops and among themselves, they always fought in the open and never attacked a force that was *hors de combat*. They have always been true sportsmen, and were just as fair in hunting food as men, and almost as keen on the one pursuit as the other. New Zealand being a country where no animals existed, it has been said that this was the cause of the Maoris' cannibalism; but it does not follow, for there are plenty of savages who are still cannibals in spite of the fact that in their countries animals can be had for the shooting. No, I am certain that the desire for human flesh first arose from viciousness, and then probably was carried on for religious purposes, but not on account of the craving for meat.

Birds, fish, and roots, with an occasional joint off a missionary or native enemy, constituted the Maori diet. Though New Zealand lacked animals, it was, and is, alive with birds ; but the largest—the moa—is extinct. This bird is supposed to have been the biggest in the world, and it must have occasioned many a feast and many a hard hunt. The kiwi is the moa of to-day, and much resembles that bird, though on a very, very minute scale. It is a quaint little thing about the size of a pullet, but rounder, with a long beak and no wings. Its feathers are more like hair, and the bird looks like a round, fluffy ball in the distance. There is another bird to be found running about that has no wings : it is the wheka, and its shrill whistle is more like a scream than anything else, and when it darts into your tent and collars a spoon, a fork, or a pipe, it is out again before you can say “knife.” It takes a very fleet dog to catch it, and then he only gets the bird, and not the article it has commandeered. The wheka does not swallow it, as you might suppose, but hides it in the hope that it will be able to return later for it. I once came across a wheka’s nest, and if I had only been engaged to be married I should have had cutlery enough

to start housekeeping. There was a wonderful assortment of goods, and all of a plated kind, bright and new. The wheka is about the size of a crow. There are heaps of other quaint birds in New Zealand, and amongst the best is the parson bird, or tui, which is as black as a raven, and has two white tufts of feathers on its neck below its chin (if birds have chins). One often hears of the "bell-like tones of the tui," and I have used the expression myself, because it sounds nice; but the tui's whistle is not like a bell at all—it is very sweet and very clear, and sounds strangely beautiful on a still day in the bush. In strong contrast to this holy bird is the kea, a kind of parrot which pounces down on harmless little lambs and, some say, steals their kidneys, and leaves them to die in the fields in sight of their lamenting mothers. But I am not an ornithologist, so I don't know much about birds, except when they are cooked. Nor do I know anything about the flora or fauna of New Zealand, or any other land, though I did know one nice Maori girl whose name was Flora. I met her at a place called Ngaruawahia (it looks very terrible, but if you say it quickly it's not half bad), on the Waikato river. The annual



NGĀRUAWĀHIA, THE ANCIENT MAORI CAPITAL

regatta was being held there, so she took me about, and told me the names of all the natives who were rowing, and yelled out most eccentric things to them as they passed.

It was a gay scene, for hundreds of people had come to witness it, and the banks of the river were lined with eager faces watching the skilful rowers. Besides the ordinary racing in the long dug-out war-canoes with their crews of thirty or forty strapping great Maoris, who sent the boats whizzing through the water like launches, there were many other unique water exhibitions which could only be seen in Maoriland. The funniest and most extraordinary was the hurdle-racing, a sport I had never heard of before in connection with boating, and have never seen since. There were great preparations for this event, and it was evident that every one was keen on seeing the fun. Long thin poles were driven into the bed of the river at a distance of about ten feet apart, and at about a foot from the water, and parallel to it another pole was hung, making a sort of goal-post ; as soon as one was finished others were put up, at various distances along the course. When all was properly arranged a great shouting announced the fact, and the competitors got under

way. The eager craning of necks and the murmured ejaculations told how intense the excitement was becoming.

Presently a gun was fired, and there was a roar of applause that drowned the shouts of the eager competitors. In a few seconds about six light canoes were being shot through the water at an astonishing pace. There were two paddlers in each canoe, some women, some men, and as they darted along they shouted with excitement and the whites of their eyes shone with glee. So quickly did they work that I could hardly see the paddles touch the water. At last the foremost couple reached the first hurdle, and then excitement grew to fever pitch ; it was a moment of breathless anxiety. The man in the bow, a lithe young native, gave a backward lurch as the canoe came abreast of the hurdle, and suddenly the bow rose into the air and the next instant the boat and its occupants were sliding gracefully over the bar. For a second they seemed to balance, and then they splashed into the water on the other side, to the tune of a rousing cheer. But the others did not all do it quite as neatly as these first performers.

The next pair were only half as lucky. Their boat

rose on to the pole and then seemed as if it could not make up its mind whether to go forward or go back again ; it hesitated for quite ten seconds, amid a breathless silence, and then, as if quite satisfied at having caused such a sensation, it turned over on its side and rolled its occupants into the water. The next pair got safely over, but the fourth did not rise to it, and, rather than be knocked on the head, its occupants capsized it before they reached the pole ; they too swam ashore, trailing their canoe behind them. The girls were particularly good at the sport, and only one couple got upset, but they managed to scramble back into their canoe (no easy task, as I know too well) and continued the race.

Boating is not the only sport at which Maoris excel : they can ride, jump, shoot, and hunt with the best of us, and they can play " footer," as many of our good teams know, but not yet with the same success as their fellow-countrymen the " All Blacks " can. But put them in a boat and give them a line and some bait, and then, if you want to see fishermen, you have a chance. I remember once witnessing an exciting fight between four Maoris and a shark, an account of which I have already published in a journal ; but I dare say I shall be forgiven by the editor for

repeating it here. It is quite a wrong idea that editors are hard, unkind, and unforgiving people: they are not. I know, because I have been one.

At the time this shark event happened I was out enjoying the pleasure of another man's company and his yacht, in the cool of a summer evening, when we caught sight of four natives in a sort of cockle-shell boat. They were hugging the shore, and we decided to keep them in sight, as we guessed they were after sharks. Behind the boat they were evidently trailing a large piece of meat. Presently one of them threw out his line, and a moment later the sail was lowered. (I may here explain that the tackle for small sharks six to eight feet long consists of thick cord, attached to which is a chain about four to six inches long, with an iron hook, which is baited with mullet or pork.) For some time they met with no success, and they began to pull in with a view to trying better ground, when suddenly the fisherman drew back, and a large black fin shot past the stern of the boat. A shark fin is an ugly thing at the best of times, but when you are in a small boat, though the water is smooth and there is no fear of a capsize, a nasty sensation creeps over you at the sight of it. Presently the

fin appeared again, and a sudden swell in the clear water told that the fish had turned—which meant he was going for the bait. A second later the native in the stern of the boat was paying out line as hard as he could—it is fatal to strike immediately a shark bites. Then a quick pull, and the struggle began. All four were now intent on the game, and the rope was drawn as tight as possible, so that the shark was allowed to tow the boat for some distance. Fearing that he might put them on to the rocks, the natives soon began to haul their line. Tugging and straining with all their might, they looked like demons as they worried at the line and danced about in their excitement. As soon as the fish began to tire, however, two of the natives returned to their paddles and began working like fury, towing the shark behind the boat. They were drowning him, but a shark takes a deal of drowning, and is a nasty customer up to his last grasp.

When they were satisfied that the fish was getting played out, the two rowers came over to the side, and the four then laid hold of the rope. Soon the great ugly black carcase began to plunge and thrash the water with a fury and vitality that

turned it into a seething foam. Nearer and nearer they dragged the struggling shark, till his nose was well up with the side of the boat. Every instant it looked as if the little craft would dip under the water and fill, and turn its occupants and their prize into the sea. The shark's tail was still lashing wildly at the water, but the natives hung to the rope. At last they had him secure; his head was level with the bulwark, and one of the fishermen then leant over the great thing, and the sunlight caught the flash of steel as he slit the shark's nose from end to end with one hard and steady gash of his sheath-knife, and the great sea-monster was dead. Then we saw them lower him into the water, and tie the rope securely to the stern of the boat, and in a few minutes they were sailing placidly home, satisfied that their evening had not been wasted.



THE WANGANUI RIVER

CHAPTER XII

Wellington and some of its windy ways—Its treatment of three of us—How to be happy though broke—Three ways of making a living, and some personal experiences.

WINDY, wet Wellington !

Whenever I have mentioned this town—without its qualifying adjectives—people have told me that the women who live there have abnormally large feet ; owing, I suppose, to the fact that they have to take a good hold of the ground, or they would be wafted away by the breezes ; and the men, so they say, can always be spotted wherever they are, because directly they arrive at a street corner they clutch at their hats.

Experience has, however, taught me never to believe condemnation, so that when I decided to go to the capital city the warnings of my friends were of no avail ; in fact, they only made my determination more strong, for I thought that maybe

Wellington was really an earthly paradise, which would account for the great majority's scoffing at it ; and what did I care if the bottles in the bars of the hotels did have to be tied to the shelves on account of the continual earthquakes ? I didn't mind one of Nature's shakings as long as there was no human hand at the back of it ; so for Wellington I booked a first-class passage in the Wairarapa. I went first-class purposely, for I believe in having a good time whilst I can, and if the winds of Wellington were going to blow me away they should not blow any of my money with me. I don't hold with throwing hard-earned cash to the winds, so I plunged my little all, all but ten shillings—ah ! was it that ten shillings that did it ? I was breaking my rule—but why worry over mistakes ? I will to the point. I sailed from sunny Auckland with all the buoyant hopes of youth, with high ideals and glorious aspirations, to seek my fortune in this centre of all things, this seat of the mighty ones—this capital city ; I was going there free from all prejudice, and ready to be won by its waywardness.

Had I really any misgivings ? was it really cowardice on my part which made me leave my

boxes on the boat after glancing at the flags that looked as if they were breaking their necks to leave their shaking staffs, and the clouds that were rolling over the sky looking as cross as two sticks? (Do sticks look cross?) Was I cross when my mackintosh was nearly ripped off my back? Did I swear when I found that no efforts of mine, no will-power, no anything, could get my form up that wharf? Did I bash my hat down over my nose in a vain attempt to keep it on my head?—Or did I imagine all these things, and was it a mere fancy that, when I got back to the shelter of the boat, I had to change every stitch that was left on my back and dry myself with a yard and a half of huckaback? Be it as it may, that night the s.s. Wairarapa took me a stage further down the coast right to the next town, to Christchurch, and for a whole year I had not the courage to face Wellington again.

Oh no! I don't need convincing now that Wellington is windy and wet, or that there are earthquakes there, but there is no need to bother about these last inconveniences, as one never notices them, and it is my opinion that it is only the wind, all the time, that shakes the place. When it finds it can't

blow the people about any more it starts on the town and gives it a turn.

But mankind, especially English mankind, is a wonderfully adaptable creature, and soon gets used to things. I got used to Wellington, and, more than that, I got to like the place—just out of spite, I suppose.

It was mid-winter when I eventually arrived there, and I had left Christchurch in three feet of snow, and taken one of her inhabitants with me. He was a curious card: a short, dapper little man, who took both himself and life very seriously; but, for all that, he amused me, and he was a man who could talk well about things in which I was interested at that time—literature, art, and politics—but he would insist on adding love to his répertoire, and that bored me, because I had seen the girl he loved. Had he dealt with the subject generally I could have stood it, and maybe enjoyed it; but he would always drag her in, and that finished me—other people's loves are so uninteresting. However, he had travelled a good deal, and as we were both without any visible means of support and were tired of Christchurch we became like brothers, and after some deliberation sent an advertisement

to *The Wellington Post* for rooms. We had to do this, for we knew we would not be able to pay for a night at an hotel, and my friend, being of an economical turn of mind, would not dream of risking the expense of staying in one till we got work; so I gave way and let him advertise. When we reached Wellington we buttoned up our great-coats, jammed our hats on our heads, boldly fought our way to the office of *The Wellington Post*, and asked for our answers. There were twenty!

My friend opened every one and read every one, and whilst he was engaged in this daring exploit I wandered to the office door and looked into the street. I had hardly been at that occupation for ten minutes before I caught sight of an old Auckland pal of mine. I rushed at him and dragged him into the office and introduced him to my short, dapper friend with his twenty envelopes.

“There’s one here I like,” said he, in answer to my look of inquiry, and he read the particulars aloud.

“What’s the address?” I asked.

“Bloomsbury House,” said he. “I like that: there’s something homelike about the name,” he added, looking sentimental—he was a Londoner.

“That will do, then,” I said, and we immediately asked our way to it.

“Look here,” said my Auckland friend, “if you fellows like I’ll join you ; I’m sick of my rooms, and was looking out for new ones——”

“It will be cheaper,” said the dapper man.

“And more amusing,” said I ; for I liked Bones, as he was subsequently christened, on account of his weakness for chops, in contrast to the dapper and economical man, who favoured beans as a cheap and sustaining diet, and was called after that vegetable.

So Beans, Bones, and I took rooms together. Bones said he was beastly hard up—he always was—and at that time was acting as an under-master at a small school just outside the town, for which he received the munificent sum of twenty shillings a week.

There were only two rooms to let in Bloomsbury House, so Bones and I shared one and gave Beans the other, which was bigger, and had a table in it, on which we decided to have our meals. The table stood by the window ; we were thus able to throw empty sardine-tins and other oddments out of it, instead of carrying them downstairs.

In New Zealand, if you are single and not too rich, you take a single bedroom with the use of the kitchen, and you buy your own food and cook it yourself, when the landlady has done hers. This was the plan we adopted.

Bones and I decided that, as Beans had the best room, he should do the cooking, and he agreed to it like a lamb. It is funny how some people are always picked out to do the least interesting jobs ; and they are generally such nice people—sweet-tempered and really good. Beans was thoroughly good—painfully good—and most industrious, and yet he never knew what it was really to enjoy himself. Strange, isn't it ? But what was more strange was his liking me, an irresponsible creature who caused him endless anxiety, and who would persist in doing just those things he would not have done himself. He never attempted to disguise his absolute horror of Bones, though he had a great respect for him because he looked "so aristocratic."

It was with this strange couple that I began my acquaintance with Wellington. Bones had his work, and we looked on him to support us whilst we were finding some—at least I did ; Beans would rather have starved than have taken a penny of his, though

he did not refuse the loan of ten shillings from me, which he must have known came from Bones. However, we got through our first week all right at the expense of Bones, but at the end of it that gentleman came home beaming with delight.

“What's up, you lunatic?” I asked, as he tipped Beans out of the most comfortable chair and threw himself into it. Bones would have made an excellent study for John Strange Winter; he was just her type.

“Bones,” he said—he loved talking to himself—“you are the luckiest dog in the world. Haven't I told you so a dozen times?”

“Let's have it,” cried Beans—he could never understand Bones.

“Well, if you really want to know,” said Bones, still smiling happily, “I've got the sack.”

“The sack,” roared Beans. “Then how——” He stopped suddenly; he was going to say “how are we to live?” but he didn't. People like Beans never do say what they think.

“Yes, a week's notice. The fact is, I think I've taught those blooming kids all I know, and the boss has just found it out. But never mind,” he added, rolling a cigarette, “we will eat hard this week, in case we don't get a chance next week.”



Photo by W. Reid

LAKE WAKATIPU

So far I had not bothered my head about looking for work, as I felt that, whilst Bones was earning a pound a week, we three had quite enough to live on in the simple way in which we were doing ourselves at Bloomsbury House ; so I had fiddled about at the library, and took long walks in solitary state, whilst Beans searched the “ Wanted ” column of the newspapers, and tired himself out asking at various places if they wanted a clerk. He was rather keen on book-keeping, and it meant a regular thirty shillings a week, which was wealth to him.

Wellington is not the place one would choose for a holiday, as it is far too business-like, and there is a hardness about it, and nothing particular to see ; though there are a few good walks and an excellent little plantation on the top of a hill overlooking the town, where one can snooze in the shade and get a fairly good view of the surrounding country. But the town itself is deadly uninteresting from a picturesque point of view—in spite of the fact that it contains, in the Government offices, the largest block of wooden buildings south of the line (by which I mean the Equator).

Two Houses constitute the Government—the Upper and Lower Houses, or the House of

Representatives and the Legislative Council. Their system of government is much the same as our own, only the Houses are named differently, and there is no House of Lords. The official buildings are good, and there are excellent shops, but none are architecturally imposing. Even the library is not a striking building, although in the colony the library is, as a rule, a good erection. There is, however, a cause for all this: Wellington, as I have already hinted, is a shaky place, so if grand edifices were put up they would probably fall down.

Notwithstanding all its little disadvantages, we three managed to enjoy ourselves very much, and when Bones brought home his last wage we called a council in the big room to consider the situation.

Bones sat by the window and punctuated the remarks of Beans and myself with comments on the people who were passing in the streets; but suddenly he turned away, shut the window down with a smack, and resolutely turned his back to it.

“In spite of their large feet,” he exclaimed, “the Wellington girls are pretty. But now to business,” he added, completely ignoring all the

suggestions we had been making as to the best way of securing a livelihood in this windy town. "This morning," he continued, "when I was teaching my boys, a man called to see me. His card was handed in by a very pretty little——"

"Never mind her charms," said Beans.

Bones went on: "Well, he turned out to be a seller of tea, and, do you know, if I had had two shillings to spare I would have bought a pound; but I hadn't, so I talked with him instead, and found out that he made sixpence on every pound he sold, and that his average sales were ten pounds a day, which, if you add up, amounts to five shillings profit, doesn't it, Beans? That means thirty shillings a week. Here is his card, and the name and address of the firm he works for." He handed Beans the card.

"But what has that got to do with me?" asked Beans.

"Everything, my boy; you must go there and ask them to appoint you as one of their agents. You are just cut out for the job; that soft tongue of yours, that moustache"—Bones hated moustaches—"and your winning smile, will get you no end of orders."

"But I'm——" began Beans, in a plaintive tone.

"Enough," said Bones, and he turned to me. "You," he added, staring at me with a frown, "look like a dejected actor, and if you were shaved you would look none the worse; therefore I have sent a copy of this advertisement to the morning paper, so your profession is fixed."

I had known Bones too long to be surprised at anything he did, so, beyond raising my eyebrows, as men do under similar circumstances in novels, I only asked him for the piece of paper he had alluded to and which I saw he held in his hand. He gave it me. As I read it my astonishment grew. It was headed, "Do you want to go on the stage?" Bones commented on it.

"There are hundreds of stage-struck idiots in every town," he said.

"A well-known actor is prepared to give lessons in elocution and stage-craft, and to fit any one with the slightest talent for a position in the dramatic profession."

Bones looked up. "Any fool can do that."

"Thanks," I said, and continued: "Terms, one guinea for ten lessons, payable in advance."

“Now,” said Bones, “we ought to get at least five replies to that advertisement, which means we will have five pounds five to carry us on for a few weeks.”

In spite of all my protestations that I knew no more about elocution than he did about common sense, he took no notice, his only remark being :

“The advertisement is already in the paper, and to-morrow we will call for the answers.”

I noticed that Beans was keenly interested, and was licking his lips, whilst a new light shone in his eyes.

“By Jove!” he exclaimed, “if we can only get about a dozen pupils we can start a theatrical company and take them round the colony.”

I wondered if he was one of the stage-struck gentlemen. Suddenly he added :

“I say, Bones, now that you have settled us, what are you going to do yourself?”

“Don’t ask rude questions,” said Bones; “I will no doubt find something suitable to my taste in time.”

The time, however, did not come, for he never attempted to do a thing the whole while he was with us, but he was excellent company, and neither of us objected to his remaining. Were I a rich

man, I would keep a fellow like Bones just to amuse me. He was not only invaluable as a source of merriment, but he was full of brilliant ideas, and could invent dozens of ways of making money—for other people—and I found in him no end of articles ; and when my elocution-class money was all spent I used to make him sit down and talk whilst I wrote. It was he who suggested that I should supply a few country papers with weekly letters on politics and Wellington gossip ; it was he who succeeded in getting the first two editors to agree to the idea ; and he personally conducted Beans round on his first day's tea-selling, and made himself so fascinating to one dear old lady that she asked him to come and call, and she was the first to open her house to Bones and me—Beans was not a society man. She was the wife of a general, and had two daughters, and they and their friends made our stay in Wellington considerably brighter than it would have been. So altogether I looked on Bones as an asset, though I cursed him for having landed me with those ten pupils. I never knew ten weeks go past so slowly as those whilst I was teaching an art about which I knew nothing.

I remember well his glee and my discomfort, when the first one who called had on his card the name of a well-known dramatic company which had recently been touring the colony. We were all sitting in our room when the landlady brought the pasteboard up. She gave it to me, and I handed it to Bones, and I know my face went a shade paler, but there was little sympathy from him.

"By gum!" he cried, "what an ass you'll look! Fancy an actor coming to learn stage-craft from you! Never mind," he added, "you've got to face it," and he made some silly allusion to a biblical remark about a plough; and then he turned to the landlady and told her to tell Mr. Blank to wait in her sitting-room.

As soon as she had departed, he dived into a portmanteau of his and pulled out a blue jacket, which the sun had turned green, and told me to put it on; then he ruffled my hair, and handed me my pipe.

"Actors," he said, "always wear faded blue coats. Now go," he added, "and bring his guinea back when you return, or by——"

I did not wait for his threat, but rushed madly

downstairs. I knew that if I hesitated I would funk it.

When I opened the sitting-room door, I saw before me a very ordinary but rather æsthetic and somewhat anaemic young man, who looked as nervous as I felt.

To make a long story short, he had only been playing a walking-on part with the great dramatic company, and the longer I talked to him the more confident I became. When I found I had nothing more to say, and he was beginning to ask awkward questions, I asked him to recite something, with the result that I noticed he sang instead of reciting ; in a moment I saw that I really could improve him, so my courage rose, and I took his money and made an appointment with him. Three years afterwards Beans met him in Sydney, and he was with a first-class company and told him he owed his success to me ; then Beans told him the whole story, and he was awfully amused, but still said that I was the best master he had had, and he had been to several. I do not quote this testimonial from pride, vainglory, or hypocrisy, but just to show how, if one sets out with the object of accomplishing a thing, it can nearly always be done,

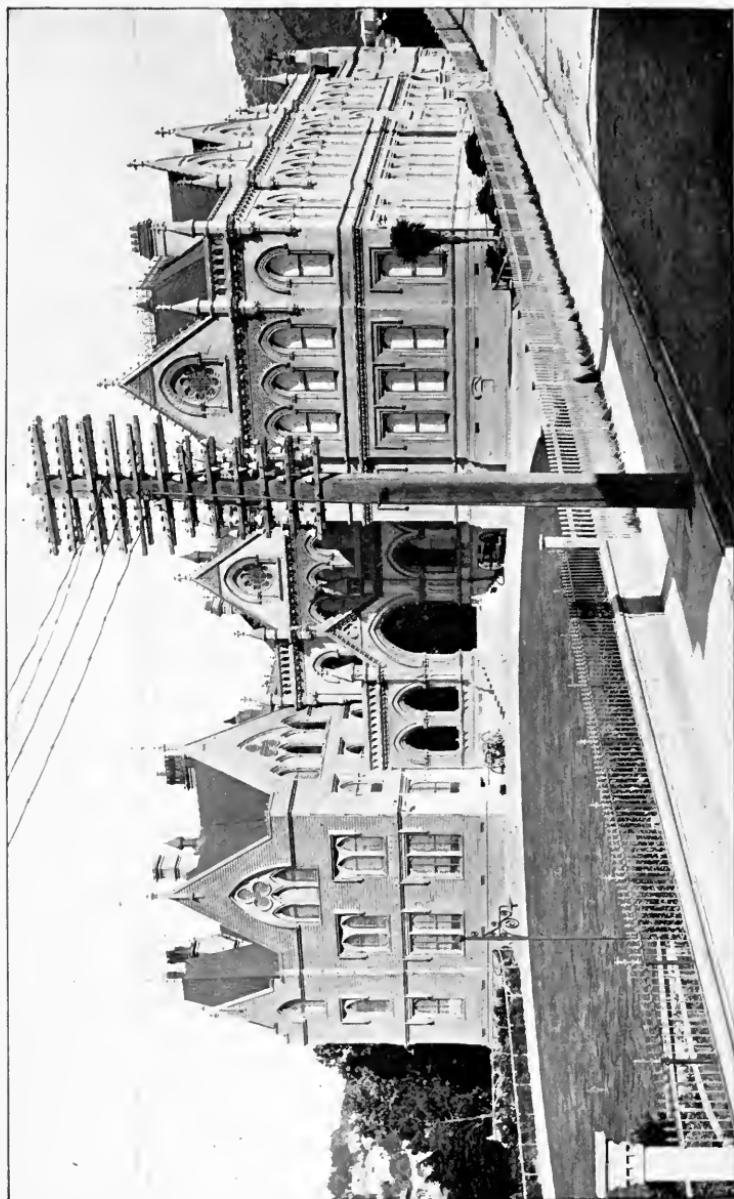
if one puts one's back into it. I bought a copy of "Bell's Elocutionist" and studied it, and then let what little common sense I had guide me. Amongst my pupils were a Methodist parson, a young girl, who has since become an entertainer, and several stage-struck youths; but the funny thing about it all was that they were quite satisfied and some wanted to continue the lessons—but I didn't, and, as neither Bones nor Beans would take on the class, it ceased to exist. Through it, however, we three had managed to keep going very comfortably whilst we were looking round for congenial labour, and by the time the class was finished I had quite a good newspaper connection in the provinces and was pouring articles into them, whilst Beans had established a connection in his tea business, which subsequently he sold, and so was able, when he was tired of Wellington, to go with me to Christchurch.

When I began this chapter I intended that it should be chiefly filled with politics, and here I am at the end of it without saying a word on the subject.

It was here in Wellington that, during my sane moments—I mean when Bones was not with me—

I began to study colonial politics, and found them so interesting that I used to spend half my day in the Library poring over Parliamentary debates ; it was here also that I first became acquainted with the late Right Hon. Richard Seddon, better known as King Dick, and got to understand why it was that his hold over the country was so great, and the reason he first became prominent and held the Premiership longer than any British statesman, and also why New Zealand is the most prosperous colony we possess—which wasn’t a bad six months’ work.

The secret of it all was that King Dick was the right man in the right place, and when the history of Britain and her colonies is written, I feel sure that Mr. Seddon will be given second, if not first, place amongst the leading statesmen of the Empire. If I were not such an admirer of a certain gentleman of Birmingham, I would give King Dick the first place ; but there is an excuse for me, as I’ve lived long in the colonies, and there the true worth of Joseph Chamberlain is known to every one, and his work is fully appreciated by all.



PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, WELLINGTON

CHAPTER XIII

Comfortable Christchurch—Some pampered pets—The shady Avon—
Rabbits' tails—Dunedin, the Scotchman's stronghold—Otago : its
lakes and scenery—Deer forests and trout-fishing.

THOUGH there are two theatres in Wellington, and the suburbs are fairly good and the walks not bad, it isn't a place I should choose for a long stay. Both Beans and Bones were also very tired of it, and as Beans was anxious to go back to Christchurch—where he thought his genius was better appreciated—and Bones wanted to go to Nelson, where his affections received more stimulation, we decided to give up our rooms and say good-bye to this windy town.

Nelson, where Bones went for his holiday, is a charming little place, very English and very sleepy—in fact, it is called “Sleepy Hollow”—and is noted chiefly for its lovely climate and English appearance, which attract many Anglo-Indian officers, who find that they can live there in comfort, and even

luxury, on their small pensions. Blenheim, Picton, Marlborough, and Havelock, the other small towns in its vicinity, are also patronised by retired officers with large families. Nelson is further famous for the fact that there are about three girls to every man. I think that is why Bones was so keen on it ; he generally went there when he was low-spirited and some one had been trifling with his affections—it is strange how some men's hearts guide their feet. As soon as he had gone Beans and I packed up our belongings and took tickets for Christchurch.

Now if there is one spot in the whole of New Zealand where a good holiday can be spent it is Christchurch, especially if the man who is taking it is an Englishman ; it is the English town, and everything in it reminds you of home. Some say it is extremely like Ipswich, but as I have not been there I can't say ; if it is, then Ipswich must be a delightful spot. The first time I went to Christchurch it was winter, and the trip down the coast was magnificent. All the way there were snow-clad hills, and black cliffs with streaks of white snow cutting through them ; and high mountains stood up like sentinels back from the sea, covered with the whitest of snow, making pictures that my



A VIEW OF CHRISTCHURCH

fountain-pen can't describe, but which I vouch could only be equalled in Switzerland. Then when I arrived in Lyttelton Harbour I thought I had bumped up against the end of the world ; for hills rise straight up from the water's edge, and it is impossible to see any way of getting to the other side of them, there seeming to be neither way nor road up them, nor any chance of going round them ; but there is a way by train, through a tunnel, and when once you are on the other side you can see for miles and miles over the Canterbury plains, and Christchurch is tucked away at the foot of these hills, with the plains stretching out before it as flat as a billiard-table, and nearly the same colour. They are lovely, except when a hot wind blows over them. Well, no, I won't say anything nasty about Christchurch, but I'll just give a warning—stay indoors when those hot winds are blowing.

Christchurch being so English, it is only natural that the houses should be as nearly like those in a prosperous provincial town at home as possible. They are solidly built and have very English-looking gardens, except that the flowers you would expect to see in a greenhouse are growing in the open, and the wattle-trees, with their blaze of yellow

blossom, and their rich, sensuous smell, grow as they never attempt to in their native land ; and weeping willows line the river-bank and weep much better than they do in dear old England—perhaps they are home-sick, poor things ; but they are all the better for it, and if only people were half as nice when they were suffering from that complaint, the colonies would be much happier places. In Christchurch you can't be badly homesick, unless you are very hard up or ill, because it is so like home, and the people are as English as you could wish, with just a soupçon of colonial frankness and hospitality that makes them infinitely nicer than many of their truly English relatives.

This little town is built on the square, all the streets except one being cut at right angles, and the four outside ones are called the North, South, East, and West Belts, and each is, I believe, a mile long ; but you might live there six months and never know what a straight place it was. Its regularity does not offend you as it does in an American town built on the same lines. In that country there is nothing so absolutely dreary as seeing one of these never-ending streets or avenues. I often wake up with a start in the middle of the

night and find the perspiration pouring off my brow, after dreaming that I was running and running and running to try to get to the end of one of these awful nightmare roads. Fancy living at the end of one of them and seeing No. 4,796 on your door every time you went in! But, thank goodness, there's nothing like that in Christchurch. The houses are not all built alike, and the High Street cuts diagonally through the town ; the centre of it is Cathedral Square. The Avon also rambles through the town, and helps to break up any hard lines that might otherwise appear. Now this river isn't really a river : it's only a creek, and when you first see it, after having heard it talked about, you will "sniff," and say something about the Thames, but when you have been there a month you will begin to love that little river, and spend many and many a delightful hour on it. It is small, but it is beautiful. The banks are nicely laid out, and kept in wonderful order, and palms and flowers and waving grass help to make a picture of it. Higher up, outside the town, the willows droop over its water and give you shade from the blazing sun, whilst you watch the great black swans floating idly down the stream, diving their heads into the

water after the little fishes ; and a moment afterwards you see them come up again, with the crystal drops of water falling from their long necks. Oh, yes, the Avon will make you like it, and Christchurch makes you want to idle or write poetry. Beans wrote poetry there, and fell in love too.

Work you can't—at least I couldn't ; and if I had to make money I wouldn't go there to do it, nor would I advise any one else to unless they went straight up into the country. There must be plenty of work there, for some of the richest farmers live and thrive on the plains, and there are big factories not far away—amongst them the Kaiapoi Wool Factory—so some one must work. In the town every one seems to idle and take things very easily ; I don't ever remember seeing any one run, and yet I suppose they do, for there is a strong body of police in the town.

When I was there quite a lot of unemployed were in evidence, and "the Powers that Be" didn't know what to do with them ; so they built them a nice big shanty to live in, and set them to work turfing the banks of the river. It became one of the things "to do," to go and watch these unemployed. The men were quite petted, and looked



THE TRIANGLE, DUNEDIN



on as Lions, whilst people made cakes for them, and gave them books to read. Yes, it's a lazy place, especially in the summer. I have heard longer sermons preached there than in any place I've been to—the clergymen go on and on, and the people sleep on and on, and neither parson nor people bother, for the dinner will keep, and probably the cook is asleep too; so it doesn't matter.

Even the trout, great fat things that they are, float down the river, and nobody disturbs them, though fishing, I believe, is allowed now, as it is in nearly all the rivers in New Zealand. The trout are there in their thousands now, but when I first saw them they were only beginning to get used to the new waters; however, like most of the importations, including rabbits, they have multiplied beyond the dreams of man.

Talking about rabbits reminds me that some years ago, when I was looking over some old files of newspapers, I came across an article with a glowing account of a fête that had been given to celebrate the occasion of the introduction of the rabbit into New Zealand. The reporter let himself go with a vengeance, and went into raptures over

the little soft-coated things showing their white tails as they hopped gleefully into the bush, and the man on whose estate they were released gave an equally glowing speech about them—how in years to come, when they multiplied, what joy he would have in seeing them hopping about.

I was told that a few years later this same man tried to get compensation from the Government for the complete ruin of his estate by those dear little soft-coated bunnies, and his delight seemed quite forgotten.

It has always been the ambition of the New Zealanders to make their country a first-class place for sport, and they have spared neither pains nor expense in doing this, so that now it is as nearly a sportsman's paradise as a working man's. There are splendid herds of deer, and pheasants galore for the man who carries a gun, and they are not the tame, household, chicken-things we are sometimes asked to shoot in England—shots that make you feel like a murderer; the birds are wild, and don't require beaters to get them off their feet. I had some excellent shooting round Napier, and also in the north of Auckland, where pheasants are plentiful, as well as many other good-eating birds.

In New Zealand they never shoot the hens, and nobody eats game unless it is fresh. I have also had some excellent sport pig-sticking, and cattle-shooting in places where the beasts have strayed and got wild. Goats, too, make excellent shooting, and there are plenty of them in parts of the island, so no sportsman need worry that he won't get enough shooting to keep him busy in New Zealand. For all this sort of thing Christchurch makes a good centre; it is the London of New Zealand, only you haven't got quite so far to travel if you are going to the meets, though you've got to jump barbed wire, which you may not like to face at first. There are no foxes, so the hunt employs a "drag," and takes good care always to end up at the right place.

Personally I would put Christchurch ahead of the other towns socially; the people are more reserved, and it is much harder to get into the swim than in Auckland and Wellington. You might live there for six months and know no one, and go away very disgusted with the place; but I was lucky in finding a long-lost relative, and he had innumerable cousins, aunts, and sisters, who seemed to take a delight in introducing me to every one

they knew, just to show me what nice people they were, and how English. If this hadn't happened I should have been clean out of it, because they have prejudices, and, if I had been compelled to work in the town, the chances are I should have remained a working man, for no one in Christchurch would speak to a 'bus-driver or a carter, though they would in Auckland. Bones made several good friends there when he was a tram-conductor, and he kept the job for a whole month—which I believe was the longest term he spent at manual labour—because he liked being made a fuss of by the charming passengers. In Christchurch he would have been scorned, in spite of his aristocratic appearance and his navy-blue serge suit.

There are many interesting places round Christchurch, all worth going to see, and New Brighton is one of them. As its name implies, it is a seaside resort; it only lies a few miles out from the town, and there is more sand there than in any place I have seen; in fact, if you sit down on the beach when a high wind is blowing you will very soon be buried. I often wonder the houses don't get completely covered up with sand;

some of them are semi-submerged for weeks, waiting for the wind to change and clear them again. The beach stretches for miles and miles, and is dazzling on a sunny day. Many people like New Brighton, but in my opinion it rather overdoes itself ; seaside resorts ought to have sand and beach, but there should be limits—you can get too much of the best of things. South of Christchurch the next important town is Dunedin, the stronghold of the Scot, and it is said that if you speak English there they don't understand you. I am not a Scotchman, and, not being an "independent gentleman," I had not the pluck to go there. There is a story that once upon a time a Chinaman went to Dunedin—a Chinaman, I must explain, can live and thrive and save money on about two and sixpence a week—but after two weeks this daring Oriental was found dead, and when the inquest was held it was discovered that he died of starvation. But Dunedin is not a poor place. It is, I believe, one of the finest towns in New Zealand, and more prosperous than any of them ; but only Scotchmen can live there, and other people merely go there if they are rich, and want to see this beautiful little town with its many

hills and lovely country. It is cold there and bleak, but the hardy Scot likes that. Personally, I can't understand people who choose to be cold when they can be hot for the same price. When there are warm places in the world, why choose cold ones? But some people are never happy unless they are thoroughly uncomfortable; so they go there, I suppose.

Dunedin, however, is a great place, and commands the situation, for in this end of the South Island lies the magnificent scenery which tourists flock to see from miles away. The Scotchmen had their eye on such possibilities, I'm sure, when they settled there.

The Otago district is the Switzerland of Australasia, and the tourists who go there are pretty sure to spend both time and money in Dunedin, its capital. The Otago lakes are magnificent, and the scenery in this district far surpasses that of many parts of Switzerland. The chief lakes are Lake Wakatipu and Te Anau; the former is in the centre of the district, about 200 miles from Dunedin, or 100 from the Bluff; it is over 50 miles long, but Lake Te Anau is the largest, having an area of 132 square miles. Lake Wanaka's area is 75 square



MITRE PEAK, MILFORD SOUND

miles, whilst that of Lake Manapouri, and also of Lake Hawea, is about 50.

Nature, however, was not satisfied with giving Otago some of the most beautiful lakes in the world, but has simply poured its wealth of beauty on it. There is Milford Sound, one of the greatest and most gorgeous sights imaginable; there are the deer forests just handy to Lake Hawea, where sportsmen gather in their hundreds; and there is some of the best trout-fishing in the world, for nearly all these lakes are stocked with brown trout, which grow to an immense size, some having turned the scale at 28 lb. The fishing is not private, but is open to all who pay the license fee of £1. The license fee for deer-shooting is £3, and wild birds can be shot without fee.

It is absurd that all these attractions should have been stowed away in one district, but it explains why the Scotchmen settled down South.

Stewart Island is a little bit of New Zealand about which I know nothing, and I hear there isn't much to know; so, having wandered to the foot of this long, thin strip, or, as the Maoris call it, "Ao tea roa" (the long white cloud), I'll get back to Auckland, where it's warm.

CHAPTER XIV

Was it Fate?—The gum-fields and life story of a piece of gum—Aristocrats and the simple life—Diggers *versus* Bushmen, and a brutal scene.

A GREAT many people in this world consider that Fate is the ruling spirit of their lives, and if, by chance, they make fools of themselves, it is Fate they blame; others consider that Luck, good or bad, as the case may be, is their master; but who Mr. Fate is, or whence comes Mr. Luck, no one has ever told me, and I am glad I never had their tasks to perform. Fancy keeping in touch with a few hundred million different human beings! Nice job that.

Now, when I told Miss Frazer, during a chat over a delicious cup of tea, that I was going to a little township, about fifteen miles north of Auckland, she said “Ah!” and lifted her eyebrows, and the only answer I could find was :

“Well?”

"I thought you'd get there before you had finished," she said, dropping another lump of sugar into her cup—she had the daintiest little hand, and seemed to poise it thoughtfully before she let go that bit of sweetness.

"Where?" I asked.

"Why, to the gum-fields, of course."

"Oh, are they up there?"

"Of course they are, and the people you are going to stay with made their fortune selling provisions to the gum-diggers."

"That's interesting," I said. "It will be nice to see those terrible fields, and the men who dig them, from the comfort of a wealthy settler's house."

"Oh, you'll get on them right enough," sighed my companion, "and you will write me long letters about the beauty and freedom of the bush and open-air life, and the feel of nature and the smell of the earth, and ask me to send you cooking-utensils. Oh, I know! All you Englishmen get there sooner or later."

The tea we were having was a kind of *pour prendre congé* tea, so I did not want to quarrel with my hostess, and just let her rattle on.

“ But you’ll come back all right,” she added ; “ you won’t be like a lot of them. Ugh ! I hate the gum-fields ; they have swallowed up dozens and dozens of good men, and they will go on doing it until the end of time.”

“ Or the end of the gum,” I put in ; but she would not smile.

“ Good-bye,” she said presently. “ You will come back.”

Now if I had believed in Fate, I should certainly have said that he had fixed things up with a deep-set purpose to drive me on to those very gum-fields ; but I don’t believe either in Fate or Luck—nevertheless, I went to the gum-fields, and went there of my own free will ; for, on arriving at my friends’, where I had intended to stay for a couple of weeks to help get in their cattle, I found there the one person in Auckland whom I thoroughly disliked, and so I decided to feign a most tremendous interest in the diggings, and spent most of my days looking round them.

It was one Sunday afternoon, when, after walking for about five miles in the blazing sun along a road as white as driven snow, and almost as dazzling, I came to a little creek where trees and great



A FULL-GROWN KAURI-TREE

spreading ferns made shelter, of which I immediately took advantage. The gum country about Auckland is flat and not over-interesting ; there is a low scrub composed of bracken fern and ti-tree, which is a sort of broom, though it has little white flowers and leaves of green ; but every inch of the ground has been dug and redug, and will be dug and dug again, before the last day comes, so that nothing interesting ever gets time to grow there, and the only bush to be seen is in just those places where there is no gum ; but, for all its semi-barrenness, there is something that fascinated me in this peculiar country, and I felt a new sensation of pleasure stealing over me as I gazed around. Suddenly my eye lit on a thin line of blue smoke rising up through the trees beside me. Here must be a digger's hut, I thought, and sprang up and made my way towards it.

First impressions are curious things, and mine always stick in my memory. I can see that quaint sack-hut and those two fellows lying on their beds of dried fern ; one was resting his head on his hand, and I can see his strong, bare arm and the coloured print-shirt sleeve that was rolled up as high as it would go. I can smell the burning

faggots that were smouldering under the billy just outside the hut, and I can hear the other fellow shouting "Come in, mate," just as if it had happened yesterday.

I went in, and in a few minutes we three were chatting away as if we had known each other all our lives.

Both men were tall and thin; one was clean-shaven and wore a monocle, and the other, a Manchester man, was thicker set, and wore a beard. The topic of conversation that I interrupted was on the difference between Canadian and Parisian French.

"I am very sorry," I said, when they appealed to me to settle their argument, "but, as my knowledge of Parisian French is infinitesimal, and my acquaintance with Canada insignificant, I am afraid my judgment would be valueless; but is that tea in the billy?" I asked, for I was mighty thirsty.

"Yes," cried the Manchester man. "Pull it off the fire; here's a pannikin," he added, as I held the billy in my hand. "Try a little rum in it."

There was a bottle of that liquid standing on the floor between the two of them, but somehow the mixture did not appeal to me; so I drank the

tea, which, after my walk, was refreshing. I'm sure I don't know why tea boiled in a billy-can, taken without milk, but with a plentiful supply of brown sugar, should taste so much better than the stuff one gets at a London "at home," but it does.

As I sat in the only seat in the tent (it was an old candle-box), I looked out through the place where the door ought to have been at the trees and the ferns, and thought what an ideal spot it was ; and the scent of the dried-up ferns which those men were lying on, and the curious yellow glare of the tent, which was composed of sacks instead of canvas, made a strange impression on me, especially when I thought of those same fellows in Piccadilly.

In one corner of the tent there was a half-filled sack, and by the side of it a box, which was filled with bright yellow lumps of stuff like amber ; leaning against it was a spade and a long thin piece of finely pointed steel driven into a spade-handle.

" So that's a gum-digger's spear," I said, pointing to it.

" Yes," said the man with the monocle, " and that's the gum alongside it ; but here is a bit of

the very best sort," he added, diving his hand behind his pillow and dragging out a beautifully clear piece of gum, polished so that it nearly slipped out of his hand. I took it and saw that it was quite transparent, and about the size of a baby's head, and nearly the same shape.

"I always thought gum was a liquid," I said, as I handed back the precious thing.

"So it is in its infancy. See there," he added, stooping forward and pointing to an enormous tree which was in front of the tent; "that is a kauri-tree, and that white resin on the branches is the gum. This piece of amber-like stuff was just the same as that a few centuries ago."

"Tell me some more, quick," I said, as he stopped and sank back on his fern couch.

"It's too hot," he replied; "ask Bob."

The Manchester man looked up; he had been puffing silently at a short clay pipe.

"Kauri gum," said he, in mock solemnity, "is the sap of the kauri pine, and when the sun makes it melt it falls to the ground and lies there; then the air and the earth play a little chemical game with it which I couldn't explain if I would, and wouldn't if I could, until Mother Earth gently

covers it up. Then ages pass, rain comes, and still that little blob of gum goes on existing, but each day it is changing, becoming harder and harder, and more valuable as time wears on. When, as the duke says, a few centuries have gone over it, we misguided diggers come along and drag it from its hiding-place, or, in plain English, dig it up, and clean it, and scrape it, and finally sell it to a blood-thirsty store-keeper—and that's the life story of a blob of gum."

"Not quite," said the duke, "for the store-keeper who buys it gives you your food, or its equivalent for it, and in his turn he sells it to the gum-merchant, who exports it to England and America. Then it drives through Hyde Park in the guise of varnish on fashionable carriages, and the women that sit inside them don't know that such things as gum-diggers exist; but I like to feel it is for them we are working—just to make them look all the nicer."

Bob was not sentimental. "Sometimes," said he, "the gum is converted into imitation amber; then it becomes the mouthpiece of a cheap pipe which an 'Arry smokes!"

For about an hour we chatted on, running from

one subject to another, and always coming back to the inevitable England, till the sun began to show signs of sinking and I got up.

“Well, if you must go,” said he who was called the duke (he wasn’t one, although his father had been the secretary of one, I afterwards found out, but the duke was so named for his aristocratic ways and his monocle), “we will come with you as far as the pub.”

It was a two miles’ walk, but all the way these two kept a rattling fire of jokes going.

“The gum-fields,” said the duke, “are the only place in the world for hard-up gentlemen’s sons. Why, there’s more real blue blood here than there is in Park Lane to-day, and, moreover, here the aristocracy is free, whilst in Park Lane it isn’t. Here we can discard the abominable top hat, the infernal collar, and that most outrageous, limb-encasing frock-coat. Can any costume be more suitable than this for a man who has limbs and wants to use them?” he asked, looking at his strange garments and then at me for approval.

“They certainly look comfortable, and, from a sanitary point of view, I should think they were excellent,” I said.



A NEKAU GROVE

"Ah! these holes! well, never mind, I like air," he said; "see, I have even removed a piece out of the top of my hat." It was a big slouch hat that drooped down over his head and face and went up to a sort of pinnacle, and the top of the pinnacle had been cut off.

The rest of his costume consisted of a pair of strong linen trousers, which had a few ventilations in them, and a tennis-shirt—the neck of which was wide open and the sleeves rolled up. His companion wore a singlet in place of a tennis-shirt, which had no collar, and the sleeves were only about four inches long; it was made of a very thick flannel. Both wore heavy, hob-nail boots.

As we reached the place where our roads parted, the duke, who had been trying to persuade me to throw up what he called "wealth and society," and join them on the fields, told me I would find them both at the tent for the next week, and if I would come they would be only too glad to have me, and would teach me the art of digging gum.

"We are the real livers of the simple life," he said. "They talk about the simple life in England; why, it's simple rot; this is the only simple life."

A few minutes later I bade them both good-bye

and returned to the abode of my friends, but that night I decided to pack my swag and join the ranks of the simple livers.

My friends were very angry at my decision, for though they had made much money by the diggers of gum, they looked on them as the scum of the earth, and thought I was well on the way to the "dogs" when I started out from their hospitable home. I suppose, as I have never seen them since that day, they think I am still at the "dogs." If I am, then come, my friends, come to the "dogs"; it's so jolly!

When I threw down my swag at the door of the tent a few days later I was greeted with a roar of welcome.

"Another convert," said the duke. "More blood," cried Bob, and in half an hour I felt as if I had been a digger all my life, and had known these two good fellows since I was born. Very soon a space was cleared on the floor and a bundle of new, dry ferns laid out for me to sleep on, and then we set to and began to prepare a meal. I only looked on; for the duke was the cook, and an excellent one he was. He was an epicure, and could prepare the daintiest little dinners imaginable,

and all with very little to do it on, and less to do it in—a camp-oven, a kerosene tin and two billy-cans, an old frying-pan minus its handle, made up the whole of his cooking utensils—and yet we had some delicious dinners, and later, when we went north and had larger quarters and more expensive articles, the meals were even better. It is remarkable what a number of men can cook, and not in the way a good many women do, but turn out things like an hotel chef. I know a couple of men who don't live far from Temple Bar who invariably cook their own dinners, and I wouldn't care to have a better one than either of them could give me. It is a mistake to think that men were only "made to mourn." Some were made to cook.

Digging gum, I soon found, was an intensely interesting way of making a quiet living. There is not the wild fever of excitement to be found in it that one experiences at gold-digging (I've been at both), but there is a steady sensation of alertness, for you never know where you are going to strike a good patch, whilst you are always sure of finding a fair amount. But I am certain that the charm of the gum-fields lies, not in the gum, but in the

freedom of the life, the certainty of being able to make a living, and the delightful companions amongst whom one lives. There are, I believe, some ten thousand men on these fields, and I should think that one-third of them are educated men; but there is one big, sad blot which I should like to be able to ignore: it is that quite two-thirds of them are hopeless inebriates. I have been to many wild places, and seen things which made me shudder, but for absolute debauchery and reckless abandonment to drink and its attendant evils the gum-fields surpass everything I have witnessed.

I remember one awful scene. It was a lovely calm evening, and I had strolled into the store to sell my gum and buy my week's provisions, for it was Saturday night; and, as is customary, after receiving what change there was after my bill had been deducted, I walked on to the hotel. It was our rendezvous, and here the diggers met on Saturday to yarn and enjoy their glass of beer; here, also, came their women, and other women who hang round these fields. All was fairly quiet until about eight o'clock, when a crowd of bushmen came into the hotel. There were a dozen of them, all hulking

great fellows, who had just finished a contract for clearing a few hundred acres of bush and had been paid off. When bushmen and gum-diggers meet in a pub there is generally a row, but how this one began I don't know. As the night wore on the bar became rowdier and rowdier, and the "chucker-out," a sturdy little Swede, was kept very busy. One after another he shot men through the open door, when he saw they were beginning to lose control of themselves ; but when things were going quietly he stayed behind the bar with the boss and another bar-man, and assisted in serving out drinks. Directly, however, his eager eye caught sight of a man who needed his attentions he would shout to him, and then, if that proved useless, he would leap lightly over the bar, and before the man knew what had happened the Swede had him gripped by the back of the neck and the seat of his pants, and the next instant he was sprawling, face downwards, in the road. I have heard men swear they would kill that Swede when they were mad with drink, but when they were sober they recognised his worth, and would most probably have been the first to have stuck by him if he had found a customer too much for him. He

was loathed, but every one knew how necessary he was. This night, however, the crowd got too much for him, and one fight after another started. The women were mad that night, and egged on the diggers against the bushmen, and the bushmen against the diggers, and then fought like devils amongst themselves, till the whole place was a pandemonium. The bar was closed down and every bottle cleared out of sight by the men behind, for by now tankards were flying and every one was fighting for dear life.

The two men I was with were almost as bad as the rest of the crowd, though they were just sober enough to see that the sooner we got outside the better (one had already got a terrible gash in his face where a pewter pot had struck him), so we put our shoulders together and began to force our way to the door. Unluckily, there were too many others trying the same game, and a dozen or so fighting to get outside so that they could have more room to use their fists, and some of the diggers were drawing their knives. Every moment I thought there would be some blood spilt; but it was a shouting, hard-hitting fight which Englishmen indulge in when their blood goes

mad. They were not bent on murder, but upon brutal dog-fighting, and they were all sane enough to snatch a knife away from any one who showed it.

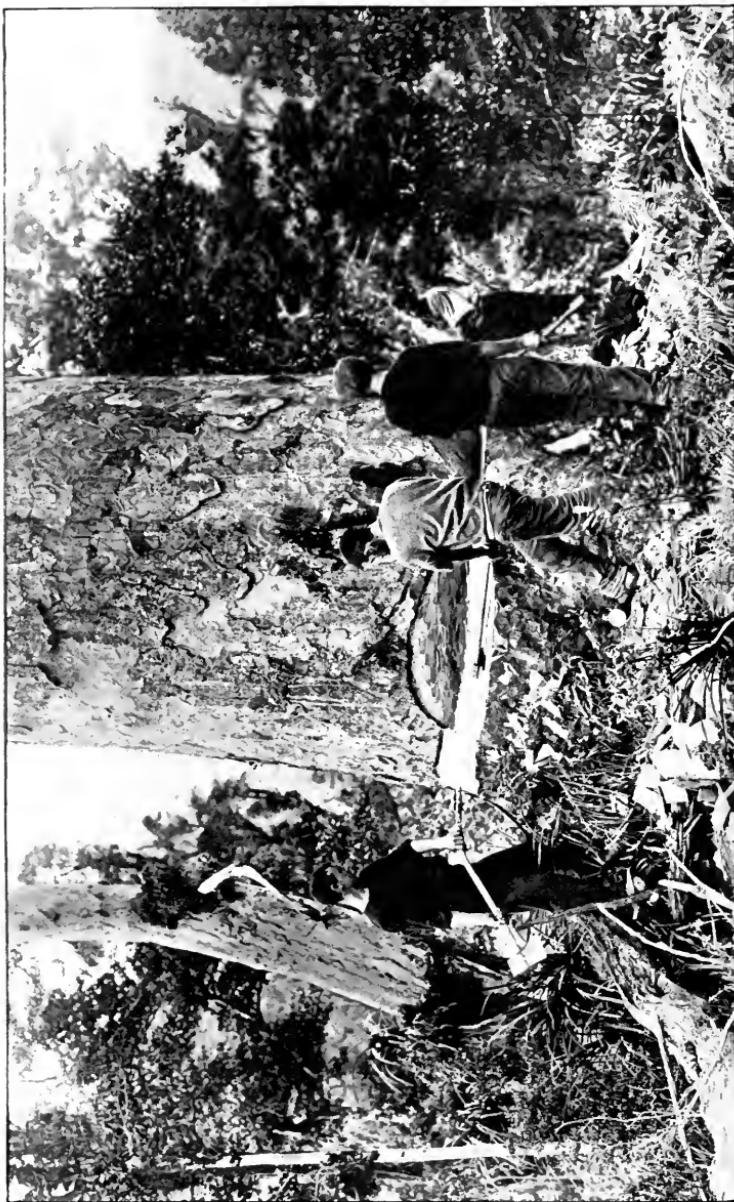
But the women had no such scruples ; they fought and tore at each other like wild beasts. It was a fearful sight, and yet one had to see it through. At the door men were fighting cruelly ; there was a kind of panic, and every one wanted to get out into the open.

Then, strangest of all, when the last rush had cleared the door, half the fighting ceased ; a few men punched each other in couples, whilst others looked on to see fair play.

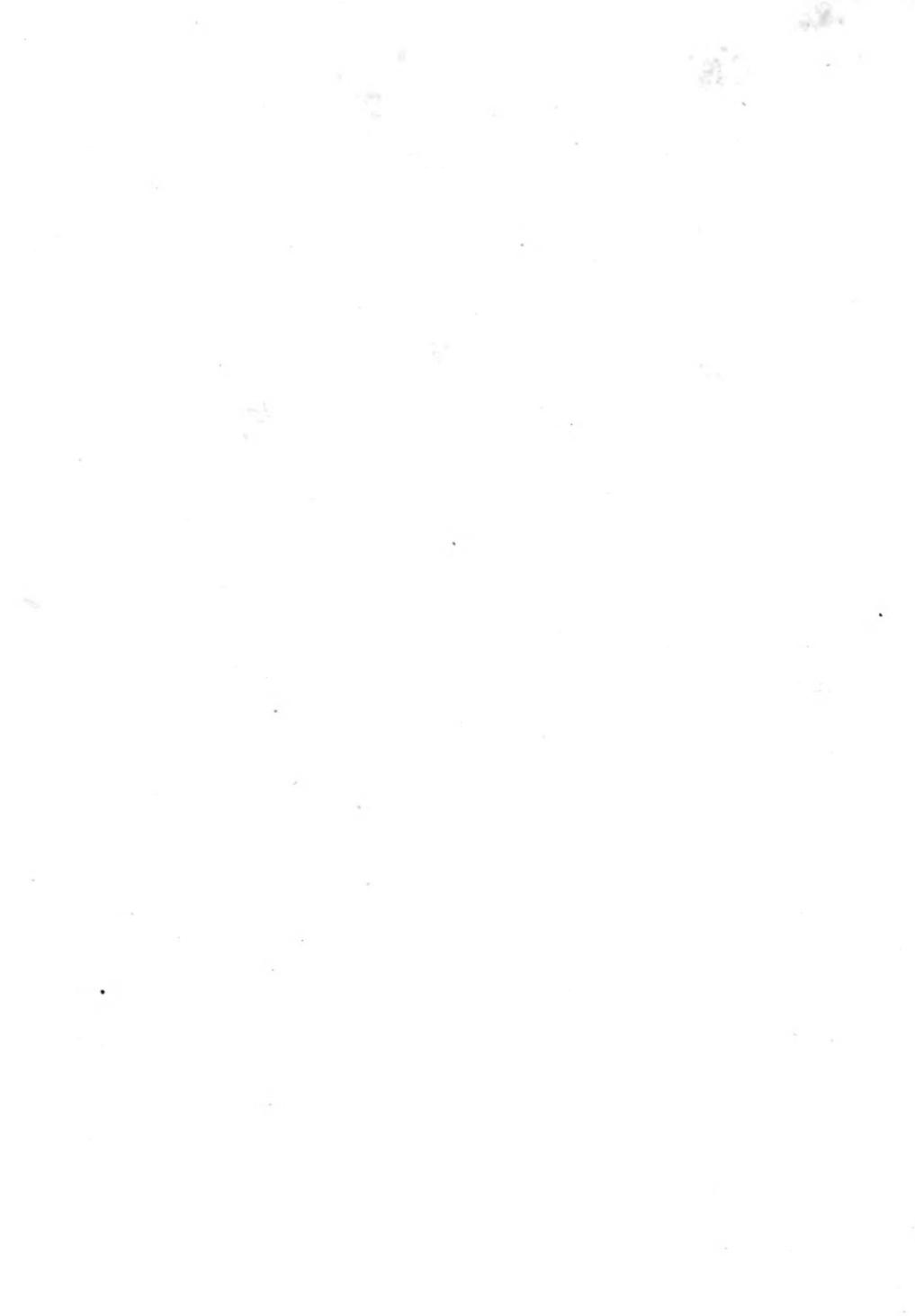
A couple of women were badly hurt, but they were hard brutes whom nothing could kill, and no one took much notice of them ; a few men had cut heads, black eyes, and swollen faces, but no real damage had been done.

When, a couple of hours later, I passed the hotel, the moon was shining placidly on an almost deserted yard. One solitary individual lay quietly snoring, with his head resting on the doorstep, and his red face, on which flickered a muddled smile, turned upwards. All else was still, and the bright moon

shone on the white roof of the hotel and the chicken-run, and glanced at the man in passing. Everything seemed calm and undisturbed ; the crickets chirruped, and even the man's snores ceased as I passed on my homeward way.



BUSH-WHACKING—THE FIRST CUT



CHAPTER XV

The bright side of the gum-fields—An up-country camp—Mad Harry, a recluse—Floods, mud, and an unpleasant walk—A burly bushman and a welcome shanty.

THERE is another side to the life of a gum-digger, a better side, which isn't all drink and debauchery ; a quiet, peaceful side, only to be found away from the townships, where the men become different, and nature in all its grandeur and beauty seems to enter into their souls and bring out the best that is in them.

I always like to get over the horribles first, so that the good things of life may leave the last impression. Therefore, having thrown off the worst side of the gum-fields, let me get to the best of them.

I found, to my sorrow, that the duke was a very hard drinker, and when the poison (we used to call the beer we bought on these fields "fixed bayonets," "streaked lightning," and "fire-water") ; they were the three brands, and the names were

strangely suitable) was in him he became half mad, so I persuaded him to come further north with me to a field where I knew there were no pubs. He hadn't any longing for drink, though he spent every evening at the hotel, and when he once started to take it he had to go on and on; but he knew his weakness, and hated himself for it, and gladly agreed to come; I could see how keen he was to get away from his present surroundings and present companions. His mate, however, refused, as he had decided to give up gum-digging and go to Auckland—this, I believe, he used to do every six months.

Soon after this the duke and I took the train to Helensville, and then boarded a boat on the Wairoa River and journeyed up it. I remember that trip well; I think our steamer got stuck about five times in five hours. I was reminded of it when going up the Thames in one of the London County Council boats. On that trip we got stranded and had to hang about for the tide to turn, and got bumped by every other boat in the company's service. The only difference in the two strandings was in the language of the captains: the London County Council man said nothing, and

tried to look unconscious when the other boats crashed into him and sent us all flying, and the little sweet-boy sprawling on his face—he too was stoically philosophic, for he picked up his wares, and then continued his journey round the boat, crying "Chocklits, chocklits," just as if he had never been bumped; whilst our skipper on the Wairoa River was very different. He cursed that river, its banks, its bed, its water, the trees that grew by its side, the steamer he was on, the owners of it, the directors of the company, the cook, steward, passengers, himself and all his ancestors, and then looked dissatisfied. I never heard a man who could cover so much ground in one string of oaths as he did that bright autumn day on the Wairoa. Nor shall I ever forget the poor, unfortunate youth who was cook, chief mate, and steward in one; how he pushed and strained at the end of a long pole in his efforts to free the steamer from the mud-bank, whilst the skipper yelled at him from the wheel. The perspiration poured off him, but the boat only swung round and struck again, yet he still pushed away at his pole, and finally I felt a sudden shock and heard a splash. The steamer was off and so was the cook, chief mate, and steward, splashing,

sputtering, and yelling in about two feet of sticky mud. We hauled the poor fellow aboard at the end of a rope, and I saw no more of him for the rest of the trip—he was not as philosophic as the L.C.C. "chocklit" boy.

After a few more adventures we were landed at our destination, where we were met by the store-keeper's man in a bullock-dray.

The duke, three other diggers, and myself were all making for the same place, so we threw our swag and tools on the dray and walked alongside it for about a mile to the store, where we purchased what things we wanted, and then "stuck up" a month's provisions; next morning, accompanied by the bullock-dray, we started for the camp, which lay about fourteen miles off.

That walk was not an interesting one, for the country in this part of Auckland is only good in patches, and, as this land is always being dug, where it is not bare it is covered by a short bracken and poor ti-tree scrub. The road we followed was as rough as it could be, and seemed to wander all over the place. It had been made by bullock-drays, and here and there, where the ground was soft, there were ruts, some three and four feet deep, which

had been started by the wheels of drays and then helped on by the rain which washed the light soil in all directions, and played havoc with what might have been a decent road. There were swamps we had to wade through where the bullocks got stuck and had to strain and tear at the dray before they could move it, and there were marshy creeks through which we also had to wade, and uninteresting bare hills we had to climb ; but all unpleasant things end in time, and this journey was not an exception, whilst the reward at the end of it was worth all its discomforts, for a brighter and more picturesque little camp than Kiaora I could not wish to see.

It was situated in a lovely little valley facing a great stretch of bush, which was cut off from the camp by a little creek. There were about ten huts scattered about in nooks and corners, and sheltered from the wind and each other by high scrub ; paths ran from one to the other, and a rough log bridge crossed the creek and led into the bush.

Needless to say, our arrival occasioned considerable interest, for new men are welcomed, no matter who or what they are, in these outlying districts, and,

in a camp where only ten men were, it was certain that at first we would be well received. Then, if we did not come up to their expectations, our only plan would be to go away again, for in the bush, if you are not liked, you are very soon made acquainted with the fact. However, nothing so disastrous happened to us, and as soon as our goods and chattels had been deposited on the ground we set to work to rig up a tent which the storekeeper had lent us, for use until we had time to build a shanty.

In less than a couple of hours the duke and I were having a meal in our tent ; we had worked like sinners, and several of the diggers had assisted us, and one, "Doctor Bill," a fat and jolly Irishman, even invited us in to dinner with him. There is no doubt that hospitality is one of the leading virtues of New Zealand ; wherever you go, and wherever you are, people, rich or poor, throw open their doors to you, and not only that, but go out of their way to assist you in every possible manner. I've known men out there who have sold half their clothes to help a man they have not known an hour, because he was in need ; and as for sharing their last sixpences, that is an everyday occurrence

Their generosity is not a matter of policy either ; it is the pure thing, and no return is expected. During the first few weeks' digging I had to learn where to look for the gum, and the men who showed me thought nothing of wasting a whole day pottering about with me telling me to dig here, spear there, try this mound, try that dip, and so on, and would on no account take an atom of the gum procured on these expeditions, though one haul I made, and dug out in less than an hour, brought me in ten shillings, which is considered an excellent day's work. If we got a stone of gum per day, which was equal to about six shillings, we were quite satisfied, as living on these fields is very cheap, and about six shillings a week will cover all expenses. There is no rent to pay and no firing to buy, and, with meat at threepence a pound, that sum covers everything. Clothes were dear things, but then nobody wore them—at least what they wore could not be so called. I knew one digger who used to boast that his trousers had not one scrap of the original material left in them—he had patched them with bits of every conceivable stuff he could lay his hands on ; and when he bent down to pick a blade of grass to clean his pipe out, I saw the name of a

celebrated flour-mill printed in red letters across a certain part of his anatomy; when I drew his attention to it he smiled.

"Yes, there's nothing like a flour-bag to sit on," he said.

There are certainly some odd costumes to be found north of Auckland, and some very odd people, and Doctor Bill was one of them. He was no imaginary doctor, but had once practised in Auckland, and years ago had taken his degrees at Dublin University, but something had swung him round—one of the two W's, I expect, and perhaps a little of both. Anyhow, here he was established quite comfortably on the gum-fields. He had lived on the land for ten years, and he told me he had never known ten such contented ones in his life; to look at his round, laughing face, and listen to his amusing anecdotes for five minutes, you knew he was speaking the truth. "The only trouble I have," he said one day, "the only care and the only thing that causes me one moment's anxiety, is the cooking of my potatoes on Sunday."—He hated cooking, and made a practice of doing enough of everything on the Sabbath to last him out the week. Needless to

say, his diet was of the simplest. Even his tea he boiled in a kerosene tin, so that it would last longer than if he did it in a billy, and when it was getting low he used to throw in an extra handful of leaves and some more water and hang it up over the fire to boil again ; cooking was not his forte, and yet he was twice as fat as any one else in the camp. His shanty was almost as original as himself. The roof was thatched with nekau, a kind of palm, and showed daylight through it in a hundred places ; the walls were made of mud, the back was sacking, and the chimney was built up of earth sods and culminated in a bucket with the bottom knocked out ; the door was a curtain made from the fly of an old tent.

The shanty that the duke and I built was an orthodox one, and consisted of thirty-six sacks, which we split open by cutting them down the sides ; a sufficient number of them were sewn to each other, lengthways, to form the roof, and the remaining ones were sewn together for the sides and back, and the whole placed over a framework consisting of two upright poles about ten feet long with forks at the top in which rested the ridge-pole, which was about twelve feet long. Four smaller

uprights, also forked, held the two long poles for the sides, and another couple of poles with a crosspiece made the framework for the door; over this the sacking was placed, and then we set to work to build the chimney, which took up three parts of the front of the shanty next the door. It was made by cutting sods of earth about half a spade deep, and placing one on the top of the other, and gradually tapering them off towards the top, where we placed a bottomless kerosene tin. These open fireplaces are splendid arrangements, and give out a tremendous heat. On each side of the shanty we rigged up our bunks and manufactured a rough table out of a piece of bark, on which we ate our meals, played cards, and did what writing we had to do.

In the morning we used to get up at about seven, and, after a plunge in the creek (if the weather was not too cold), we cooked breakfast, and then at about 8.30 or 9 o'clock started out to dig. If we intended going far we took our billy-cans and some food, generally a hunk of bread and cheese or a piece of cake, which we ate at about midday. At about 3 o'clock we would wend our way homeward, and then, after changing our clothes and indulging

in a wash, we would either lie down in our bunks and read, or loll about gossiping with the other diggers. After tea we scraped the gum we had brought home. To get the dirt or rough edges off we used a scraping-stool or box, generally the latter, which we sat on stride-legged, holding the gum with one hand against a piece of wood nailed to the end of the box, whilst with the other hand we applied the knife. Whilst doing this we also sorted the gum by throwing the best of it on one side to be sold for a higher price. The *peka*, in which the diggers carry their gum, is made out of a sack cut in half, with two shoulder-straps put on to it, so that it can be carried on the back, and as the digger finds his gum he drops it over his shoulder into this bag-like contrivance. Most of them also carry a little bag round their waists for small bits of gum, which, when filled, they empty into the *peka*.

Sundays, they say (I hate that expression), never got as far as the gum-fields, but, in spite of it, that day was a great one with us, for on it we did our clothes-washing, we made our cakes and bread, cooked a particularly big dinner, and chopped down a tree to supply us with firewood for the week. In the afternoon we slept solidly and soundly, and

in the evening sat outside our shanties and yarned.

It was a life of peace, but beyond that there was nothing, neither progression nor deterioration ; everything was at a standstill. One day was the same as another, unless by chance we got a haul of gum, and that was exceptional. It was a life of idleness, for, though we worked, we did so in the most casual way. Often I put a book under my arm when I started out, and ended up by lying down beneath a shady tree in the bush and reading it till I fell asleep. There was no hurry, and no one to bother you if you did not come back to your meals. Sometimes I wandered away into the bush and did not return for a couple of days, and as long as one of the diggers knew I was going it was all right, otherwise they would probably have sent out a search-party for me. It was on one of these excursions I came across the weka's nest, and saw my first kiwi, and one day, just about lunch-time, I caught sight of a curious-looking shanty where I had never expected to find one ; it was on a cleared space right in the heart of the bush, some six miles from any human being. Seeing there was smoke coming from the chimney,



BUSH-WHACKING—THE LAST CUT



I made my way down to it, and before I got there I distinctly heard a man talking. It was a queer hut, but its surroundings were very beautiful; great trees and palms and towering kauris formed its background, whilst a little babbling creek that ran through a perfect garden of ferns and moss-covered rocks passed the foot of a small patch of kitchen garden, where pumpkins, cabbages, and melons were growing. Two sleepy black cats were lying by the door, and when I came up to them one arched his back and hissed at me as if I had been a terrier.

“Pompey! Pompey!” I heard a voice from the shanty, “why this language?” The next instant a most curious-looking individual came to the door. “Come in, sir, come in. I take it you’ve lost your way, or you would not be in this neighbourhood,” he said.

The moment he spoke two facts were obvious—the first, that he was mad, and the second, that he was a gentleman.

Judging by his appearance, I should have guessed him to be a man of about fifty, but, as he lived in a region of imagination, time probably did not treat him the same as other folks, for I heard later, from one of the store-keepers, that he had never

grown a day older in appearance since he had known him—some twenty years. In talking to him one would have thought he was still a child. He was simple and natural, though I could see he was a man who had read a tremendous lot, and who now mixed up the classics with the gum-fields, and Greek mythology with his cats, whilst the bush was a perfect fairyland to him, wherein the gods made love and fought. The storms were mighty battles ; he gave me a most graphic account of a fight that had recently taken place not two hundred yards from his "palace," and he was eager that I should go with him and see the havoc that the enemy had played with the trees and scrub. What appealed to me most was his "palace," as he called it ; it was the most peculiar hut imaginable—there were tables, a washhandstand, and a bush-made bookcase that contained quite a collection of literature, mostly classical, which he had evidently picked up at second-hand shops. Stones, shells, and quaint bits of wood were placed about in curious order, and he had strange names for all of them, and stranger tales about their discovery, to which I listened till I was tired. Everything was scrupulously neat and clean. As it was getting

near meal-time, I accepted his invitation to a "feast," and we sat down to boiled pumpkin, tea, and salt beef, which was not bad. My host apologised most profusely for not being able to offer me wine, but, instead, gave me a serviette, made, I should say, from the tail of an old white shirt. He was decidedly amusing, but to me there is an unpleasant feeling in talking to a man whose mind I can't get at, and as soon as our "feast" was over I made my excuses, in as old-world a manner as I could, and left him. As I climbed the hill behind his shanty I could hear him talking away to his cats as if they were human beings, and laughing as happily as a child. I wanted to pity him, and yet, somehow, I felt that he was far more contented in his airy castles than thousands were who had no such buildings.

On returning to camp, I told the duke of my adventure. He laughed, and said he was known as "Mad Harry"; then I learnt that there were quite a dozen more like him, all living away in the bush by themselves, some more mad than others, but they were mostly men who had seen better days, and about whom there were strange stories. Some had been jilted in their young days, and had come

to the bush to try to forget, and then by degrees had gone off their heads ; others were the victims of drink, and for some nature and their parentage were responsible ; but all of them seemed happy, and when they went into the store for their provisions they were treated well, and no heed was taken of their little eccentricities.

When the winter came, and with it the rain and the floods, the road to the store got so bad that one month, when provision day arrived, the bullock-dray did not appear. As most of us had a fairly good supply of flour and tinned meat we managed to grub along all right, expecting each day would bring us the dray ; but when a whole week passed and still there was no sign of it, and the floods were still rising, we began to get anxious, and there was a talk about some of us going in to see if we could not manage to carry a few things back with us. Tobacco was wanted badly, and it was the lack of this that decided me to be one of the party, for I was down to the last day's allowance, and I could not conceive what life would be without something to smoke.

The party consisted of three. The duke said he relied implicitly on me to bring him back all

he needed, so saw no necessity to wade fourteen miles in discomfort when he could be quite happy at home—so like a man.

Of the trip I will say nothing, except that it was one of the worst walks I have ever taken. The roads were in a terrible condition, and we had the greatest difficulty in making headway; sometimes we were actually up to our waists in mud and slush, but eventually we got to the store, ordered what we wanted, and went on to the hotel and spent the night there. The next day two of us started back; our companion had been won over by Bacchus, and was not in a fit and proper condition to travel such an uneven road; so we left him behind. Had the stores we were carrying been lighter all would have been well, but they and the awful roads fagged us out before we had done half the journey. We made several attempts to push on, but it was no good; we were done, and decided to make for a digger's hut which lay about half a mile off the road, and rest there. The digger was at home, and he gave us a good meal, and we began our travels again about three hours later. Like idiots, we tried a short cut which landed us into bogs, rivers, swamps, and everything else that was objectionable,

till, in desperation, we made for the bush which was on our right. Here, at least, we felt sure we would be able to get foothold on the ground, and, as it was higher than the road, we hoped it would be dry.

At eight o'clock that evening, when darkness had settled down, we came to the conclusion that we had completely lost our bearings, and the only thing to do was to wait where we were until daylight came!

It was a lively prospect, as we were not only drenched to the skin, but had no billy and could see no place of shelter—except the trees, and lying down under them on slushy fern is not compatible with pleasant dreams.

Our provisions consisted of flour, raw beef, and tobacco, none of which were appetising in their present condition, and, as a fire was out of question, we had no supper to look forward to. As we thought of all these things a gloom settled over us. I leant against a tree and swore, and my mate sat on a fallen log and sucked at his pipe and watched the drops of rain fall from his hat on to his knees—we were both very sorry for ourselves.

Suddenly we were startled by hearing a faint

coo-ee, which seemed to come from the centre of the bush, and sounded about half a mile away.

My mate sprang up.

“Thank goodness, some other beggar is lost!” he exclaimed. “I wonder if he’s got any whisky on him,” he added, and then answered the call with an energy I thought he did not possess. “*Coo-ee! coo-ee!*” it rang through the bush, and was echoed on every hill-top, and then by another voice.

Again my mate let forth, and again the answer came; this time it was a little nearer. For ten minutes we kept the call going to guide our fellow-wanderer, till at last we heard his heavy tramping and heavier swearing as he parted the scrub and finally stepped out before us.

“Who the hell are you?” he asked, in a manner I thought lacked respect.

The man was a hulking great fellow, dressed in a thick singlet, duck trousers, gaiters, and a great slouch hat. In his hand he was carrying a tomahawk (small axe).

For a moment after his appearance we looked at each other, then the big man spoke again:

“Damn you, I’m looking for my mate.”

"Well," said my companion, who had now resumed his seat, "if your mate's as thirsty as I am, I'm sorry for him. Got any grog?"

The man seemed lost in contemplation. "You are a couple of pretty-lookin' beauties. Lost?" he asked.

"Yes," said I, "are you?"

"No, but I think my mate is. You'd better come up to the shanty; there's a gang of us here clearing the bush. I'm going back myself; you'd better follow," he added, and immediately he turned round and began to retrace his steps. We hurried after him, and, in about ten minutes, after much struggling through the thick and tangled bush, we came on a bush tramway (there were no electric cars running), and at the end of it we could see a big bush shanty and hear sounds of merriment coming from it; but best of all was the smell of cooking that was borne to us; it gladdened our hearts and lightened our loads. But I will not attempt to describe my feelings, or the look on my mate's face. There are some things too sacred to write about.



BULLOCKS HAULING LOGS



CHAPTER XVI

More about the bush—The pleasures of a fire—I return to Auckland—What a boom is like—The end of the run.

INSIDE this long wooden shanty there were four men seated round a blazing log fire, and one of them was the “missing mate” for whom our friend had been looking. When we entered we were called to the fireside and asked for our story, which we told. They were a bright lot of fellows, all strapping great men, who looked as if they were made for heavy work. Two were Australians, our rescuer being of that nationality—as I had already guessed from his peculiar language—and the other three were New Zealanders.

Our wet clothes were soon dry and our insides soon full; and in less than half an hour we had quite recovered our spirits and were ready for our beds; these we made up on the floor by the fireside with the aid of borrowed blankets. As we were in no hurry to return, the next day my

mate and I watched the bushmen at their work. This was not the first time I had been to a bushmen's camp, for bush-felling, or, as it is termed, bush-whacking, was a favourite pastime of mine. Had the late Mr. William Gladstone and I met, there would have been at least one topic on which we could have agreed.

The average bushman is not to my taste, but the men with whom I worked were young settlers far away in the north, who had taken up bush land and were clearing it to sow grass, and these men were rattling good company, several of them being well educated. Bush-clearing is interesting work, and though I admire the sentiments of him who wrote, "Woodman, spare that tree," I can't help saying that there is something grand in felling, by your own exertions, a giant kauri-tree that towers overhead and spreads its great branches right and left ; to see it totter and come down with a thundering crash, burying perhaps half a dozen smaller ones in its fall, and then to be able to look at it lying at your feet and say, "Alone I did it." I like to get my axe swinging nicely and feel it slipping into the wood, and see the chips flying right and left. It may be that my bump of destruction is abnormally

developed, but it makes the life-blood tear through my veins, and I feel that there's something in me, after all—which is not an unpleasant sensation in these times of keen competition.

When a big tree has to come down a platform is often erected, and two or four men take their stand on it, two cutting at the back and two in front. First of all the lean of the tree is noticed, and the direction of its probable fall taken into account, for it is this that regulates the places to be cut. I forget the technical terms, but the front notch is cut about a foot lower than the back one, and, when sufficient has been taken out, the front men stand clear and leave the two at the back to finish up. Sometimes this is done with axes, and sometimes with a cross-cut saw. Directly the trunk begins to crack then every one clears out, for there is often not a second to spare before the tree falls, and no one knows what it may bring with it, when the bush is thick with vines; and some trees have a knack of swinging round just before they fall, and if any one is in the way he is likely to get hurt.

When the tree is down it is cut into logs, and these are dragged by bullock-teams along the tramway (a long line of wooden sleepers), out of

the bush to a river, or the railway, to be taken to the saw-mills. Sometimes, however, the bush is too far from the mills for the wood to be used, or it is being cleared for sowing grass; in these cases the whole bush is set on fire as soon as all the trees are cut down. The big ones are sometimes left standing, or are used for making the fences, in which case they are cut into logs and then split by dynamite and converted into the posts and rails.

In setting fire to the bush, a day is chosen when the weather is fine and the wind is in the right direction: a long line is cleared and some three or four men run along it with torches, and if it is dry weather the whole bush is soon in flames. It makes a grand sight as long as you can watch it from a safe distance, but if you get on the wrong side of it, as I did once, its grandness is lost sight of and its terrors become magnified.

It is an awful feeling to rush before flames that are coming after you, that are circling round you and roaring like thunder in the branches over your head, and not to know where you are racing to, or what lies before you: for the smoke is blinding you and choking you, and the heat is overpowering. Every time you stumble you feel



LOGS ON THE WAY TO THE MILLS



that you can never get up again, and yet you do, and rush on with death at your heels and fear in your heart. Yes, I felt all these sensations when I got cut off by a change in the wind and had to run like mad to the open country, and only got there with about two minutes to spare. But every man who's been in the bush knows the terror of a fire, and many a poor fellow has felt the flames pass over him when they have won the race.

The men at the camp we struck were working for the saw-mills, and every log had to be taken to a creek about two miles away and then floated down it till it got into the river, where a tug would be waiting to tow it up to Sawdustville—the name given to a group of small towns on the Wairoa where mills abound.

We waited at the camp to see one big tree come down, and then after lunch returned to our camp with the provisions. I need not add that we were well received, and that the tobacco was literally torn from our hands.

For some months I worked on the different fields in that neighbourhood, and then, one day, I woke up with a strange feeling of unrest. I had been thinking, I suppose, and it suddenly dawned on me

that if I stayed here much longer I should lose touch with the world, and just then the world seemed to be calling, and I began to wonder what every one was doing ; if Auckland had changed, and if—Well, I didn't get any further than that ; I just set to and packed up my swag, sold my remaining gum to the other diggers, and before midday was on my way to the store to draw what money was owing me and go with it to Auckland.

* * * * *

When you've been in the bush for six months you feel mighty strange in a town, and your braces seem to chafe your shoulders, and all your clothes feel too small, and your collar cuts your throat, and when you go to your bedroom in the hotel you look under the bed, and perhaps jam a chair against the door, after locking it carefully, and do no end of other silly things—for you become beastly nervous in a town. It's the confinement, I suppose ; for you feel as if you couldn't move. Then, when you get into bed, you are seized with a fit of "nerves," and end up by having nightmare ; but it all wears off after a day or two, and you think what an ass you've been ; but that doesn't alter it—you are just as bad the next time.

I have seen Auckland under many different conditions, but never in such a wild state of excitement as it was then. People were hurrying along the streets with eager faces; men were standing in groups discussing mines in excited tones, and the whole place had an air of business that had never shown itself before. Stocks and shares were on the lips of every one, and an old money-lender I knew told me he had never lent so much on pianos all the time he had been in Auckland as during the last few weeks of the boom.

Auckland was bitten, and every one was up to the hilt in shares.

The Stock Exchange, which at any other time looked like a deserted market-place, was a scene of the liveliest interest. Every available space in the town was let, and nearly every room in every hotel was occupied, and every one appeared to be gloriously prosperous.

I soon threw myself headlong into the swim, and in a few days was as mad and as happy as the rest.

Miss Frazer abused me roundly, but quite agreed that it was better than gum-digging, on which point we did not argue, for I was enjoying the whirl of

life then as much as I had been the peace and solitude of the bush a few weeks back. Never in the history of Auckland had such times been known, and money flowed like water. Men who were paupers yesterday were rich to-day, and so keen was the boom that it was safe to buy anything, for all shares were on the rise.

Paeroa, Waihi, the Thames, and every other mining centre sprang into prominence; every day a new mine was floated, and new towns sprang up like mushrooms; miners flocked from all parts, and with them came prospectors and experts.

Oh, it was a gay time, and I enjoyed every hour of it. By a stroke of luck, I got an appointment as a mining reporter on one of the papers, and occupied my time in going from one field to another, and in the intervals of work I spent happy days in Auckland, where picnic parties, tennis parties, and musical evenings were in full swing. I also made flying trips to places I wanted to see; to Wanganui—one of the prettiest of river towns—to Hawera, a curious but typical township, to the Waitakerei Falls, just a few miles from Auckland, and many other places to which my fancy led me. For six months things boomed; but one day men's



AAROA MILLS, WAIROA RIVER



faces began to look stiff ; the eager rushing became nervous running, the wild excitement a panic, and the boom which had begun in a flash died down without even an after-glow. If its beginning had been sudden its end was more so, and a month after its knell had been sounded the whole of Auckland was changed. Window after window sported a "to let" card, men went about with long, sad faces, and the outgoing boats were crowded with passengers. Dust hung about the streets, and office windows became dim and dirty ; auction sales were frequent, and fires abnormal ; a clerk was missing here, a well-known churchman there, and a business man's friends were inquiring for him somewhere else, and then it all settled down, and the notice-boards were removed from the Stock Exchange, and the newspapers no longer quoted prices.

The change was very depressing, and every time I walked down Queen Street I felt as if I were treading on the graves of dear friends. But we who had weathered the storm and remained behind tried to laugh off our sadness, and sometimes we succeeded, but I was unsettled and felt I needed a change. The spirit of unrest had got hold of me again, and I began to think of home, and wonder

how far London had spread, and one day, as I sat on Mount Eden looking out at the sea, the longing for movement got too much for me, and I decided to go.

I felt sad about it afterwards, for there were things that dragged at me in New Zealand and wouldn't let me forget, but the Spirit of Travel is unrelenting, and I had to move.

To make things worse, that erratic creature who is responsible for the weather turned on one of its best samples for the last three days of my stay in Auckland. The sun had never shone so brightly, nor the green things looked so green, and I am positive Miss Frazer's eyes were browner than ever, and the flowers in her gardens more brilliant; and I nearly, as nearly as possible, relented.

Had some insidious creature come up to me that last day but one, and poked his fist round my chair, as I lounged in a glorious garden listening to the gentle chatter of a lady dressed in white with a racket lying at her feet and a sunbonnet swaying in her hand, and said, "Give me that ticket," I would have handed it to him like a lamb. The blue of the harbour, the scent of the flowers, and the peace of the hour, had entered my soul, and I wasn't

thinking of home, and St. Martin's bells weren't calling. But he didn't come, and I kept my ticket.

"In six months," said Miss Frazer, "you will have forgotten there is such a place as New Zealand; but I'll come and see you off, for all that," she added, as I took leave of her the day before I sailed.

I hate good-byes, and avoid them as I would the plague, but there are some that leave a pleasant feeling, which, in after years, bridges the gulf of time and distance.

Slowly the line of coast became hidden in the dusk of the evening; slowly the steamer wrestled its way to the sea, and the last of the islands sank behind; but still I thought I could see a pair of brown eyes that weren't laughing and a handkerchief waving to me. And just then a remark that Bones once made came into my head :

"We have all got to live, wherever we are, so why not choose a decent place whilst we have the chance?"

As I thought of this sage remark I realised only too well what a good place he had chosen, and I was leaving.

* * * * *

Pearl of the Pacific,

Au revoir.

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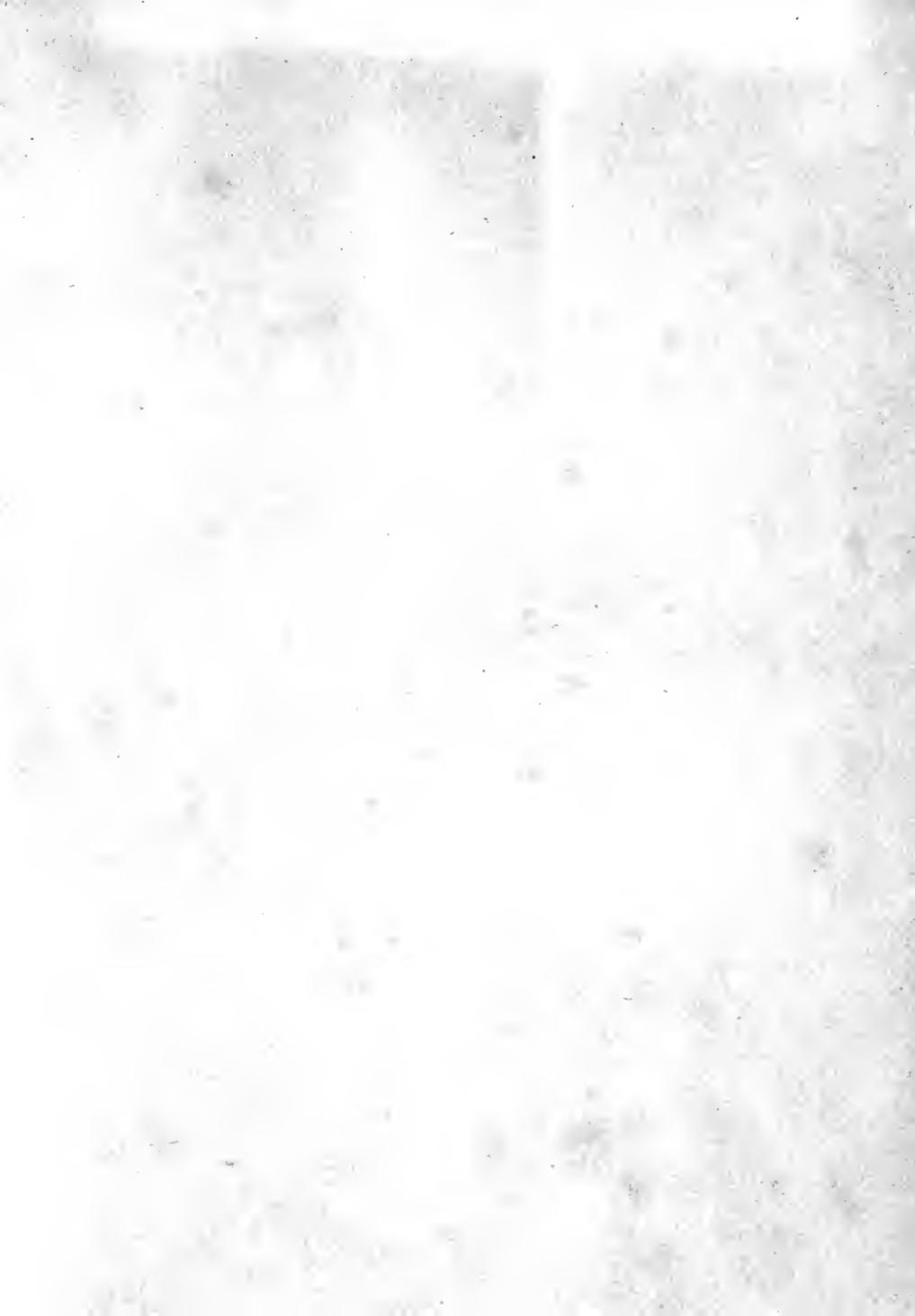
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